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THE ORATORY AND POETRY OF THE BIBLE

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The Oratory and Poetry of the Bible

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PREFACE

For the past fifteen years I have tried to incite my students in New York University, in Rutgers College, and now in the Seminary, to read the Bible, not as a task, but as a pleasure, and have had fair success. The books of the Prophets look very dull simply as books but when we look at them as largely sketches of orations and exercise our historical imagination to hear the orators speak, they become intensely interesting. I have tried in the classroom to so describe the times, the questions of the day, and the men that we could imagine ourselves in the crowd facing Isaiah, for instance, as he held the multitude spell-bound by his eloquence.

In this book I make the same attempt, but now I am forced to adopt the device of "Short Stories of Great Orations," as told in letters supposed to have been written by those who heard them. Such letters describing orations by Webster, Beecher, or Gladstone are of much general interest and help us to hear them, so I would help all hear Moses, Amos and Paul.

As the best poetry is largely impersonal I have not tried to make the college students acquainted with the Poets nor have I tried to give technical lectures upon poetry; I have simply tried to show the strength and beauty of some of the great poems of the Bible in such a way that they would desire to read them and appreciate them.

I send this book forth that it may do for all who read it what I have tried to do for the college students, quicken their interest in reading the Bible: my book is not an end in itself, only a means to an end.

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PART I
INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF ORATORY

The power of oratory is vast and mysterious. A great crowd is gathered to hear an orator. It is a popular assembly. Some have come out of interest in the cause to be presented, they are opposed to it or in favor of it; some have come out of interest in the orator, they admire him or are curious to hear him or perhaps they dislike him; some have come simply because there is a crowd and they like crowds. There are various grades and conditions in the crowd: the cultured and the uncultured, the learned and the ignorant, the successful and the failures, the well-clothed and the poorly-clothed, deeper grades still: the bright and strong in mind, the dull and stupid, the heavy in heart, the buoyant as well, those of a deep and rich emotional nature, and those poor and shallow in their feelings, those strong and stable in will and those weak and vacillating.

They grow restless as they wait for the orator. He is a lawyer perhaps, and has argued many cases before the jury and the court; or perhaps he is a member of Congress and has advocated causes in the Senate; or perhaps he is a preacher and has plead the cause of his righteous Lord in many church services. He has won his reputation as an orator in one of these ways, but he has a different task before him now. There is

no sanction of Court or Senate or Church to hold these people, the assembly is in a public hall or in the open air; they are not special classes familiar with and trained in certain lines of thought whose present duty is to hear a well-known advocate; this is simply a vast popular assembly. The oratory he has exercised in other fields must take a loftier range now if he succeeds in holding and swaying this crowd of people. At last he steps upon the platform; he stands within the easy view, he speaks within the easy hearing of the multitude.

Now as we are trying to estimate the power of oratory we will imagine ourselves as seated upon the platform by the side of the orator and looking out upon the faces of the multitude. There was loud applause when he stepped out upon the platform but it was evidently led by his admirers and the friends of his cause, there were many who did not applaud, they were listless or they were opposed. Soon the restlessness of the mass subsides; favoring faces become eager; dull, listless faces begin to light up; frowning looks brighten into smiles. Now there is a burst of applause, this time it is not manufactured, it is spontaneous; it is not partial, it is general. Soon the interest becomes too deep and strong for frequent applause; the faces are intense, the forms straighten and bend forward, the silence grows oppressive. Still the orator speaks on, he holds the multitude as by a spell; they think his thoughts, they feel his feelings, they choose his choices. What is he doing? He is pouring his power into the multitude. This is the power of oratory. One man becomes a thousand men.

His thoughts, his feelings, his will take possession and rule the thoughts, feelings, will of a multitude. He changes them, he moulds them into new men in certain directions, he even gives the sluggish a new life, at least for a time.

This surely is a vast power. How does the orator work such changes? This is a great mystery. Perhaps we can learn something of this mystery if we now imagine ourselves as seated in front of the orator, a dozen seats away; we are now part of the crowd. How does he sway us, mould us? He speaks in such a way that we can understand easily all he says; his speech is clear and pleasing; his words are well chosen, familiar, and skillfully grouped; there is movement in his sentences, a kind of musical wave that bears us along and charms us. The tones of his voice are marvelous, every change of thought, every breath of feeling, every choice of the will expresses itself clearly and naturally. How the man acquired this art of speech there is no time to consider, we are simply swept along by it. His speech has the charm of music, the spell of great harmonies, we listen enraptured. But it is not only the voice that so expresses his thought and so thrills us, the whole man speaks; his face, especially his eyes, respond quickly to every passing feeling; he has

> "An eye that tears can on a sudden fill
> And lips that smile before the tears are gone."

His voice and eyes and face are so many avenues through which his soul enters into and subdues ours. So it is with the postures of his body and the gestures he makes. All these are separate languages and he is

the full master of each; the way he stands before us on the open platform, the way he walks about, the way he holds his head and moves his hands and arms reveal to us and impress upon us his thought and feeling. The marvel of it all is, that without an apparent effort, without any seeming intention even, all these varied languages are in perfect harmony; and each seems needed with the others to express the full thought and feeling of the orator. The subject he is presenting to us is so great, is so fully understood by him, has such complete possession of him that it grasps and uses all these powers of oratory to express itself and enforce itself upon us.

Now a strange thing happens to us. While we are charmed by voice and eye and gesture we become unconscious of their charm; it sinks into our subconsciousness and we are alive only to what he is saying; we are intensely alive to that because he is such a master of it; the truth he is trying to convey to us is so great and clear and important to him that we lose sight of him in seeing it. Here is the mysterious power of oratory, at least one of its main elements. The truth, through the personality of the orator, impresses itself at the instant upon a multitude of personalities. There seems to be no other power just like it.

This orator has a great mind, he thinks clearly and strongly; he is well informed on his subject and widely informed on all related subjects; he has all his thinking power and wide information at his ready command; he knows what to say not only but how to say it to interest others, to lead them to his conclusions. He is

thoroughly convinced of the truth and of its importance and so he convinces us; he forces his thought and conviction upon us.

This orator has a rich emotional nature, a feeling heart as well as a thinking mind; and the truth as he sees it stirs his emotions: it is these strong emotions so aroused that thrill in the voice and shine in the eyes and so stir our emotions until we, to the extent of our powers, feel as he feels.

This orator has a vivid imagination; he makes us see that striking incident, or that beautiful scene, because he sees it, sees it so clearly that he vividly describes what he sees and we see it through him.

This orator has a good conscience, he values righteousness above all else; his lofty moral emotions are his overmastering emotions, they sway him; and so he persuades us that righteousness is on his side, that the cause that controls him ought to control us.

This orator has a strong will. His will is entirely enlisted in this cause. His thoroughly aroused will appeals to our wills, arouses them and enlists them in his cause. Herein is a large element in the mysterious power of oratory. The truth has such complete possession of a richly gifted person that he, through the various languages of communication at his command, impresses a multitude of persons in his presence so they think and feel and resolve as he does.

There is one other element that adds to, perhaps, rather than throws light upon, the mystery. It may be called the contagion of a crowd. As we sit before the orator listening to him intently, it is not as if we were there alone or only a very few; we are sur-

rounded by intent minds, beating hearts, aroused wills. Some one starts applause, we are swept along to swell it; some one sighs, our pent-up emotions almost burst their bounds. These are the movements we can estimate; there are others, strong, pulsating, but beyond estimate. The orator is impressing himself upon multitudes who are in touch with each other, who are influencing each other in thought, in feeling, in purpose.

Something may occur which will sweep the multitude beyond the control of the orator, such things have been known; but generally this contagion of the crowd has taken the direction incited by the oratory though going beyond the desired limit. This extreme only shows what a great force the personal influence of the crowd has upon itself and upon each member of it as awakened by the mysterious power of oratory.

Then there is the contagious influence of the crowd upon the orator himself, even of certain classes in the crowd. He wins the attention of those opposed, and he goes on with an increased effort for greater victory; he arouses those listless ones, and he becomes clearer and stronger; those dull faces are touched, and his emotions gather strength from them; a gleam of awakening resolution shows itself in eager eyes, and he doubles his appeals; the growing enthusiasm of his followers lifts him to loftier flights of eloquence. Streams of personal influence flow from his soul into many souls, their responding feelings incite him to more vivid thought, they draw the reserve forces of his mind and heart into splendid action, they stimulate his reason, memory, imagination, feeling, will, and

the stream of his personal power becomes a vast flood and sweeps the multitude along in its mighty volume.

We may not fully understand the mystery; we may not fully estimate the vast power of oratory; but we feel it. Tomorrow morning we read the verbatim report of the great oration in the newspaper; it is clear, it is strong, but it is cold; the life has gone; the heart of fire has ceased to beat. It is all true, but it is truth alone; the personality of the orator has faded away; his vast, mysterious power has vanished. By the imagination we may recreate the scene, may again become one of the crowd, may again see and hear the orator, may again to some extent feel the power of oratory.

PART II

SHORT STORIES OF GREAT ORATIONS

CHAPTER II

THE KIND AND AMOUNT OF ORATORY IN THE BIBLE

A LARGE part of the Bible is the report of orations. The narrative makes us acquainted with the speaker, describes sometimes quite fully the occasion, gives a concise report of the oration and estimates its effect upon the people and succeeding history. Many of these orations were spoken in the ancient Hebrew tongue. The language itself was finely adapted for oratory; it was not philosophical but popular; not scientific, but poetic. It had great simplicity, clear visions, direct points of view, large conceptions, a scorn of petty details. It had great strength; it was even so sensuous and passionate that it frequently expressed its feelings in terms of their physical manifestations. The simple directness of our English Bible is due largely to the translation of this strong Hebrew language into our English tongue at the time of its greatest strength, in its golden age, that of Bacon, Shakespeare and Milton. The dignity of the Latin and the grace of the Norman-French were harmoniously mingled in not too large proportion with the body of strong Anglo-Saxon, so forming our clear and vigorous English. The Bible is stronger even than Shakespeare in words of Anglo-Saxon origin.

Hebrew oratory has thus been very finely rendered for us into our own language.

The breaking up of our Bible into chapters and verses, while extremely useful for reference, has however been a very serious hindrance to the flow of vigorous oratory, it has spoiled many a fine passage, it has kept many readers from even recognizing they were reading an oration. It is quite possible, for instance, to read the book of Deuteronomy by chapters and verses and not at all recognize it as a book of great orations. Whatever view may be taken of the origin of the book, the form of it is that of oratory. One of the greatest men in the world's history, at the close of his life, makes a series of orations with the lofty purpose of persuading a nation to elect God as their King. Very few orators are great enough to be compared to Moses; very few orations compare with these in lofty eloquence; each oration leads to the next, the pause of silence and reflection between adds to the impression, and there is the steady progression to the climax of the final oration; Moses marshals facts, arguments and appeals with marvelous power.

In the first oration, chapters 1:6-4:40, Moses announces his deposition: that he can no longer be their leader.

In the second oration, chapters 8:51-11:32, he delivers to the people the code of laws for their guidance.

In the third oration, chapter 28:1-68, he exhorts the people to obey the laws.

In the fourth oration, chapters 29:2-31:8, he makes his final appeal to the nation to form a solemn covenant to have God and obey Him as their King.

The succeeding history flows from this important occasion and shows the large effect in the nation's life of the action urged by this series of orations.

In the later books of the Bible-narrative we frequently meet with men called prophets, they were men of brave and faithful speech urging the people and their rulers to acknowledge God as their King. When kings arose in the national life these brave men told the most arbitrary kings that they were only sub-kings after all, that God was the real King of the nation.

In the later days of the nation's life some of these prophets gathered up and arranged the sketches of the orations they had made to the people and their rulers, and thus the resulting books of the prophets we have in our Bible are really books of oratory. Many look upon these books as characterized mainly by prediction and think of a prophet as mainly one who foretold the future. There is a remarkable element of prediction in some of these books, but it is very small in comparison with the oratory, and the more remarkable because small.

The prophets were preachers of righteousness, not as we think of preachers today, confined in their ministry to single congregations, these were rather national orators; they endeavored to arouse the nation to loyalty to their God, the righteous King. They were men of such superior ability that they won the attention of the nation and made a large impression upon it; men of great eloquence who used their gifts for the lofty object of advancing civic and religious righteousness.

The quality of many of these orations fills us with admiration. The Golden Age Oration of Isaiah, chapters 2-4, contrasted the darkness then prevailing with the splendid future that might be brought into existence. The Salvation Oration, Isaiah 24-27, described the songs of praise arising after the silence of despair. The Shiloh Oration of Jeremiah, Jeremiah 7-10, depicted in terrible terms the results of unrighteous living. Many passages from these ancient books are among the brightest gems of the world's oratory. The wonderful imagination of Isaiah brings before our eyes his vision of the dead kingdoms arising from their graves to exult over Babylon as she falls into the grave, Isaiah 14:9-20. In like manner, to cheer the oppressed of his people, Ezekiel gives the elaborate description of Tyre as a stately ship brought to silence in the midst of the seas, Ezekiel 27. Nahum, in his short book, describes the awful majesty of God as he leads the forces of destruction against Nineveh.

Glancing now at the New Testament we find the Gospels are books of oratory. The loftiest thinking, the finest feeling and the noblest willing the world has ever known, clothed in the most charming forms of eloquent speech, pour themselves out in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ for the noble purpose, the highest object an orator can have, the salvation of man from all that is low and groveling to the life in fellowship with the righteous God, the rightful King of the soul.

The Book of the Acts is also a book of oratory; in its rapid narrative there are nineteen concise sketches of orations; orations by great men well adapted to

their lofty purpose of leading all men to the noble life of loyalty to God their righteous King.

There is a subtile element of the power of oratory that makes that of the Bible of more interest to us than the oratory of any other age or clime; it may be called the spirit of all the ages. Generally oratory belongs specially to its own clime and age. It is true that men of all ages and climes have much in common. It is true that the orator is the easy master of the great things that interest mankind. It is true that domestic virtues, love of native land, loyalty to national traditions, courage, devotion are the general themes of oratory. But it is also true that the orator and the crowd he influences belong to the same special age and clime, that there are interests of special value to them, that these awaken kindred thoughts and feelings peculiar to their present time and condition; and that these special interests have very little value to us today.

It is for this reason we find that we do not feel the thrilling contagion which moved the crowd when Demosthenes was arousing them against Philip. But when we stand with the crowd before Isaiah or Paul the spirit of their age is the spirit of ours as well, these orators are trying to awaken loyalty to the ever present righteous God; the temple courts have vanished, the hill of Mars is far away, but loyalty to the righteous God is a thrilling theme of everliving interest.

While this makes Bible oratory of special interest to us it can be only by recreating the occasion, by imagining ourselves as in the crowd hearing Moses or Ezekiel, Jesus of Nazareth or Peter, that we can more fully estimate the value or feel the power of their

oratory. In order to help in this needed effort, I have imagined, in a few instances, one who was swayed by some great oratory describing it in a letter to a friend: these letters form the following chapters.

Since poetry is near akin to oratory I have added chapters on the Poetry of the Bible.

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF THE FOUR ORATIONS AND THE FAREWELL OF MOSES

A Letter from a Son of Naphtali to His Brother in Egypt

From the time our army won its last decisive victory over the untold hordes of our foes the march of our nation has been unopposed and very hopeful, every day seemed to bring us nearer our promised land. But the days have been long and many and our eyes have grown weary looking only upon the great desert stretching out on every side to the far off sky line. Then came a day long to be remembered, when our march brought us over the ridge of the desert and we saw below us a large lake and on the farther side a land of hills and valleys covered with olive trees, vineyards and fields of grain, and beyond it the sun was sinking to its rest.

But now a strange thing happened, the wonderful Cloud which had guided our long, slow march and paused each night for our needed rest, paused as usual, and then slowly rose to a great height, which was the signal that here we were to form a camp for a longer stay. The next day was a busy one, each tribe knew its own work and place, the Tent of Meeting was set up in the middle of the camp and the tents of all the

tribes were arranged in order on all sides of it, as Moses had directed many years before. Our camp extended over a great space, two or three square miles it must have been, but was so arranged that from every part of it the Tent of Meeting could be easily seen. We had lived in many such encampments in various parts of the desert, in some of them for several years at a time, but now we were out of the desert on a high table-land sloping down toward the great lake, and from it we looked over upon "the land flowing with milk and honey," and we were eager to enter upon our promised inheritance.

Several days followed in impatient waiting. It was a camp of young men and women, scarcely any were over forty years old, all were eager to go on under our great leader in whom we placed the utmost confidence. Soon it began to be noticed that Moses, who in other encampments had passed among the tribes in familiar converse as a father among his children, did not now leave his own tent. Those who on various matters called upon him there, reported him well and strong but strangely silent and depressed. A great anxiety began to mingle with the impatient waiting, and groups of men and women, wherever formed, talked with each other concerning the mystery of the long delay.

Then one morning just after the hour of worship, while the smoke from the altar of sacrifice was still rising through the quiet air, and while the people were still standing before their tents, there rang out three long blasts from the silver trumpets blown by the Levites before the Tent of Meeting, and easily heard to the farthest bound of the camp. This was a well

known signal for the elders of the people and the captains of the army, the representatives of all the tribes, to assemble at the door of the Tent of Meeting. All was now eager expectation, we felt sure the waiting was nearly over, that directions were to be given for the conquest and division of the land, and all the people watched the elders and captains as they gathered at the appointed place. When the leaders of the farthest tribes had reached us we were over twelve hundred men standing close together and pressing as near as possible to the platform before the Tent. At first there was the buzzing of earnest but reverent conversing with each other of the probable message we were to receive, but this soon gave place to solemn silence as we waited for Moses to come before us.

When he came forth we could not help seeing the great change that had come upon him. His tall form had all his accustomed dignity and strength of bearing, his noble face had the majestic expression we had often seen before of one just having had an audience with the Lord God Almighty, and of bearing his message to his chosen people, his eyes as usual seemed not only to look upon our faces, knowing each one of us well and lovingly, but to look upon our inmost souls. But now for the first time he seemed to carry a message which was a heavy burden to him and which he knew would be hard for us to bear; his form, his face, his eyes all expressed his great sorrow. His voice was always wonderful, far-carrying, penetrating, musical, thrilling, conveying tenderness and pleading, sternness and command, courage and confidence in its tones, but now as he spoke to us it seemed to carry a strange mingling of

sad regret and patient resignation that pulsated through our being from the first word until at the last it broke into a painful silence.

His great speech* will be remembered by us all throughout our lives; but there were three short passages in it that are written on our hearts. He began by recounting the Lord's leading us and governing us by our own chosen leaders until the time when, upon the report of the spies we had sent to examine the land, we rebelled against the Lord and he sentenced our fathers to wander and die in the wilderness; then said Moses, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Thou also shalt not go into the land of promise.' " The voice of Moses trembled as he spoke these words, and many exclamations of sorrow broke forth from our lips.

Moses again took up his speech and told of our wanderings in the wilderness and of our discipline into an orderly camp and army, and then of our recent victories and marches; then Moses almost overcome by his feelings said that after these victories and very recently he had besought the Lord, "Let me go over, I pray thee, and see the good land beyond Jordan. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes and said, 'Speak to me no more of this matter, thou shalt behold the good land from a mountain-top but thou shalt not go over Jordan.' " We could not now restrain our feelings but broke out into loud and almost rebellious protest. As soon as he could speak again and be heard Moses began to exhort us to faith in the Lord our God, and to a careful obedience of his command-

* Deuteronomy, Chapters 1: 6 to 4: 40.

ments, and at its close carried on by his almost overmastering feelings, he told us of the sad result of disobedience, saying, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes and sware that I should not go over Jordan but I must die in this land. I must die here on this side of Jordan. You will go over into your great inheritance, but I cannot lead you any farther. I must die here: and now within a few days."

Then the assembly broke up in silence and each delegation returned to its own tribe. We found the people gathered before the tents eagerly waiting for the glad news that we were soon to march to take possession of our promised land. We had to tell them instead that Moses could no longer be our leader, but was about to die. Grief could not be restrained, lamentations loud and prolonged filled the camp, strong men broke down with sobbing, women and children wept as though their hearts were breaking. For years Moses had been with us, a great leader awakening admiration and loyalty, and we depended upon him as representing the Lord God to us, we revered him as great in himself and as great in his office and we had never thought of his failing us or leaving us. Then too he had never held himself aloof from us in his vast dignity, he had never withdrawn himself from us in his lofty position, but had mingled among us as a father. As he frequently passed through the camp he placed his hand upon the heads of the children, he talked with the mothers of their cares and joys, he spoke to the young men and maidens of their hopes and plans, he familiarly consulted with the elders and the captains and their men concerning the various details of the march and the

camp, of the past experiences and of the present prospects.

That Moses the trusted leader, the loving friend should die, and die now as we were on the borders of our land when we needed him so much, when our hopes were almost realized and yet so difficult of full realization, hopes centering in his leadership, hopes he had shared with us, which were peculiarly his, that he should be disappointed, that he should fail us, that he should die now, it was too hard for us to bear; we broke down under it. The grief was heartfelt and contagious; men, women and children, the whole camp, as the news spread, broke forth into sobs and lamentations.

There followed two long days of silence and sorrow, no songs were now heard in the camp, even the song Moses had given us when we came out of Egypt through the Red Sea ceased from our lips. Before there had been much laughter and rejoicing among all the tribes, our hardships were over, our prospects were bright, our friendships and relationships were close and happy; but now we met each other with tear-filled eyes and broken voices; even the Promised Land itself, as we looked off upon it through the clear air, seemed remote and unattractive.

On the morning of the next day the three long blasts from the silver trumpets called the representatives of the tribes to another assembly before the Tent of Meeting. In the long address* which Moses now made to us there was a careful and stern subduing of his strong feeling of disappointment which had so filled his

* Deuteronomy, Chapters 5: 1 to 11: 32.

former speech, his resignation to his personal fate was manifest and his determination to do the best he could for us now that he was about to depart from us was the prevailing tone of his whole speech. There had been prepared under his direction, copies of all the laws God had given us through him during the past forty years, as he had carefully arranged them; and now Moses gave to the elders of each tribe a copy of these laws and also his fatherly advice about their value and how best to keep them. With all the dignity of his character and of his vast experience he began his address: "Hear O Israel the statutes and the judgments which I speak in your ears this day that ye may learn them and observe to do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers but with us, even us who are all of us here alive this day."

As he began so he continued his whole speech with great deliberation and earnestness as befitted his theme and his position, the man grown wise with vast experience, the father of his people, the great leader and lawgiver of our new-born nation. At its close he gave the Book of the Law to the elders for all the people and said, "Ye are to pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you and ye shall possess it and dwell therein. And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and the judgments which I set before you this day."

When, returning to our tribes, we reported to them this second speech of Moses it affected them as it had affected us, our sense of personal bereavement in the loss of our great leader became subdued and in quiet

reflection upon the laws our God had given us we began to see what a priceless possession they were and that they would go with us, they could not be taken from us if we carefully cherished and obeyed them.

The early morning hours of the next few days were spent by each tribe in hearing the law. The people were assembled before the tents and the leading elders taking turns, read the laws aloud and explained them in the hearing of all. This was the first time the whole collection of the laws given on various occasions during the past few years, some at Sinai, others on our journeys, had been read to all the people as a whole. We now knew how fully God had through Moses provided for the life we were to lead in the land of promise. There was the assurance in this provision not only that we were to take possession of the land, but that our prosperity would depend upon the kind of life we as a nation lived in the land.

After this deliberate time of instruction there followed a third call of the silver trumpets and the representatives of the tribes again assembled at the Tent of Meeting. Moses in this third speech* described in very earnest and striking terms the blessings which would follow a hearty and constant obedience to the laws. "The Lord shall establish thee for an holy people, he will open his treasury to bless all the work of thine hand, all the peoples of the earth shall honor thee, thou shalt lend and not borrow, thou shalt lead and not follow, thou shalt be called by the name of the Lord." The thrilling tones of blessing now gave place to the stern threatening of the awful curse which

* Deuteronomy, Chapter 28: 1-68.

would follow the disobedience of God's laws: "If thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, thou shalt serve thine enemies in hunger and in thirst and in nakedness and in want of all things."

Moses in this speech directed that when we had taken possession of the land we should set apart two mountains near the center of the land with a narrow valley between them, as the mountains of blessing and cursing, that these laws should be carved in stone upon the sides of these mountains, and that once in every seven years the twelve tribes in large numbers should assemble in solemn convocation, six tribes upon the one mountain and six upon the other, that the elders in the valley between the mountains should read the thrilling blessings and the stern cursings Moses had given, and as each blessing was read the six tribes on the mountain of blessing should respond with a loud AMEN and as each cursing was read the six tribes upon the mountain of cursing should respond with their solemn AMEN; and that thus the memory of this charge of their great leader should be kept alive through all the coming generations.

When the assembly to whom Moses had spoken broke up and the representatives of the people returned to the tribes, each tribe was assembled before the tents and the elders told them of the blessings and the cursings and all the people responded with their solemn AMENS. Moses now sent directions through all the encampment that when the next assembly of the representatives of the tribes was called all the people, the men and the women and even the children

should gather before the tents facing the Tent of Meeting, and that they should listen and observe what the elders and captains did and said, and that then they all should do and say the same things.

When the next morning after the early worship, while the smoke of the sacrifice was still rising through the still, clear air, the three long, loud blasts of the silver trumpets sounded through the camp, the representatives of the tribes gathered to hear Moses and all the people assembled before the tents facing the Tent of Meeting. There followed a wonderful and awe-inspiring sight. The Cloud that had led us through all our journeys descended from its great height as it had often done when we were to break up our camp and take up our journey again, but now besides hovering as usual over the Tent of Meeting it took possession of it, especially of the Holy of Holies, and glowing with a mystic light brighter far than it usually had at night it made the Tent itself luminous in the sunshine. Our fathers had told us of the lightnings of God's presence as he descended upon Mount Sinai at the giving of the Ten Commandments and now in this glowing Cloud God seemed to manifest his special presence again to all the people.

Moses now spoke* to the assembled elders and captains of the covenant God had made with us at Mount Horeb, that he would take us for his people; and he now urged us to make our covenant with him, that we choose him to be our God and King. With most solemn earnestness he told us of all God had done for us, but that we had not fully understood and responded to his

* Deuteronomy, Chapters 29: 2 to 31: 8.

great deeds; the Lord, he said, "had not given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear unto this day." Now he had come specially near to us at the close of our wanderings and as we were about to enter upon the land he had promised us. He had given us his laws and now he offered to write them upon our hearts, they should be our most precious possession, and we were to be loyal to him as our King; we must now turn to him with all the heart and all the soul, we must choose him as he had chosen us. With thrilling speech Moses now closed his appeal: "I call heaven and earth to witness, I have set before thee this day life and death, therefore choose life, to love the Lord thy God, to obey his voice and to cleave unto him, for he is thy life." He paused; and under the spell of his eloquence, swayed by him to do what we knew to be right, all the elders and captains lifted their hands toward the glowing Cloud shining over and through the Holy of Holies and with loud and solemn voice declared, "We choose the Lord to be our God and King," and then we all prostrated ourselves with our faces to the ground before him. All the people gathered before their tents heard the solemn avowal and witnessed the solemn action and they too responded "Amen, we choose the Lord to be our God and King," and they too prostrated themselves with their faces to the ground before God.

Moses now urged us to "be strong and of a good courage, for the Lord thy God, he will go with thee, he will not fail thee nor forsake thee." He then called Joshua forth from the assembled leaders of the tribes and in the sight of all the people appointed him to be

the leader of the host and assured him that the Lord would be with him to lead his people into the land he had promised their fathers to give unto them. Moses and Joshua now turned and presented themselves before the Lord whose presence was seen in the glowing Cloud hovering over and shining through the Holy of Holies of the Tent of Meeting. The withdrawal of Moses preparing for his death and the appointment of Joshua as the leader of the host, and the choice of the leaders and of all the people so solemnly made of the Lord to be their God and King were all then accepted by the Lord. The Cloud of his presence now slowly rose to a great height in the clear air and remained standing over the camp. Moses on his return to the assembled leaders of the tribes gave them a song God had directed him to prepare which they were to give to all the people to commemorate this great day of the choice of God by all the people. It was to be sung through all the coming generations with its solemn warning and its lofty cheer. The song of Moses and Miriam at the crossing of the Red Sea had been the exhilaration of the people on their wanderings in the wilderness, now this song of Moses at the choice of all the people of their Divine King was to be added, to keep ever fresh in mind and heart this glorious day with its appeal to loyalty to God and confidence in him.

Moses as he dismissed the assembly gave directions that on the following morning after the sacrifice, all the tribes were to assemble before their tents and remain standing there waiting for him and he once again and now for the last time would visit them. There was little sleeping in the camp that night, every

heart was thrilled by the momentous events of the day and in anticipation of the morrow when their venerated leader whom they loved as a father would make his farewell visit to each tribe.

In this as in all our encampments there were three tribes in front of the Tent of Meeting, three tribes on each side and three in the rear. Between the tribes and the Tent of Meeting there was a large open space, over this space a strong voice might carry in the still, clear air and the action of a group of men might be easily seen. This morning the air was as clear as crystal and as still as still could be.

Moses* came forth from the Tent of Meeting alone and at once advanced to the first tribe. He remained with that tribe a little while and seemed to be talking familiarly with them, he then lifted up his hand and in a loud voice blessed them: "Let Reuben live and not die. And let not his men be few." He then passed to the next tribe, spoke familiarly with them, again we saw him lift his hands in blessing and again we heard his thrilling voice as he said: "Hear Lord the voice of Judah, and bring him in unto his people. With his hands he contended for himself. And thou shalt be a help against his adversaries."

We now saw that our tribe belonged to the last division he would visit and that while his progress was deliberate it could not well be over a couple of hours before he would reach us. We also noticed that as he passed from one tribe to the next a single man from the tribe came from the ranks to accompany him, and soon a growing group of men followed at a little dis-

*Deuteronomy, Chapter 33.

tance from him. As he passed to the second division of the tribes his voice in blessing each tribe became somewhat lost in the distance and his action became some little indistinct to us as we watched him. The Tent of Meeting was between that division and ours. Our eyes wandered from his stately progress at times, we looked up at the Cloud of mystery high in the heavens, we looked over where Moses was passing the tribes, to the beautiful land beyond the great lake, the land so soon now to be our home; but these wonderful scenes could not long claim our attention from him. Sometimes also we looked behind us at the steep and lofty mountain which rose from the ridge of the desert. We had often been tempted to climb that mountain but the laws of the encampment were very strict that no one should venture beyond its bounds. Then again we watched Moses as he and the group of men following him advanced toward us.

At length he came to our tribe. There was a great sorrow and a wonderful joy upon his face as we now looked upon him. He spoke to the women words of tenderness and cheer. He laid his hand on the heads of the children as they came to him and blessed them. He counselled the leaders concerning their duties. He called our chief leader to join the group following him, and then lifted up his hand and blessing us said: "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord, Possess thou the west and the south." As he passed to the next tribe our hearts would fain have followed him. How could we let him go? How could we think of never seeing his face again, of never hearing his voice?

When he had blessed the last tribe of our division he spoke a few words of quiet command and a way was opened for him, and he and the group of the leaders following him passed through the tribe and began climbing the mountain behind us. When he had reached the first resting-place he turned and lifting his hands he blessed all the tribes, his wonderful voice could be heard in all the camp as he said: "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place and underneath are the everlasting arms." He looked long upon the camp and upon the Cloud and upon the far away hills of the Promised Land and then turned to resume the ascent of the mountain.

When they were near the top we saw them stop and Moses spoke to his followers. It was a short message but at its close they stood still and he went on alone. Our eyes followed him longingly as he slowly climbed the steep peak and at length stood upon its top. He now looked back upon us, a long, lingering look and then he crossed to the farther side of the peak. We watched and watched for his return, but he did not come back. Our eyes saw him no more.

The group of men who had accompanied him waited a long time on the mountain-side, at times they seemed about to follow him, but at length as the evening darkness began to gather they returned to the camp. They reported to us that Moses had told them that he must go on alone and that he would never return, that God would show him the land so dear to him from the mountain-top, that he would then die and God would bury him. He then charged us that neither we nor any from the camp should ever climb to the mountain

top, should ever try to find the place of his sepulchre, that we must leave him in the keeping of his God.

During the remaining days of our encampment that mountain-top dominated our thought, fascinated, tyrannized over us. When it caught the first rays of the rising sun, when the glare of the noon-day covered it, when the evening shadows clothed it, when the silent stars passed over it our eyes watched it dimmed with tears; it had lifted our beloved leader from our sight; it was his lofty sepulchre.

Then one evening the Cloud descended and hovered over the Tent of Meeting, it was the signal to prepare to march. The next day all was orderly and rapid preparation, but often we paused to look long and eagerly to the mountain-top. When the next morning the Cloud moved in its mysterious majesty, it led us around the foot of the mountain and over the ridge of the desert to the northward. We now saw the river flowing into the great lake, we saw the wide valley and the steep hills far to the north, we descended into the valley coming near to the river where the Cloud descended and we formed the camp for the night. The next morning the mysterious Cloud, so long familiar to our eyes, vanished away, and we never saw it again.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF TWO GREAT ORATIONS IN THE CITY OF SAMARIA, BY AMOS AND HOSEA, DURING THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM II

A Letter from a Prince of Israel to a Merchant Prince of Tyre

Fair Samaria, the city of the ivory palaces, the capital of our flourishing kingdom, has put on her gala-dress today. Her banners proudly wave from every vantage point, her people in their festal robes throng her streets and parks, while shouts and songs and laughter everywhere resound. The news has just reached us that our great King has captured Damascus and that he is leading our victorious armies to take possession of the rich plains along the rivers beyond the northern mountains. Soon he will return laden with the spoils of great cities and those prosperous lands will henceforth pour in their rich tribute to our growing wealth and power. But underneath all our triumphant joy there runs a strange feeling of depression, we are conscious even in this hour of victory of a deep foreboding of coming ruin. We know it is not awakened by any lack of confidence in our victorious King, he is as prudent as bold, a wise statesman as well as a great warrior. But recently we have been under the spell of two great orations spoken to thou-

sands in the assembly squares of our city, and spread by them among all the people. One speaker was from the nation south of ours, the Kingdom of Judah, the other was one of our own people.

The orator from Jerusalem called himself a prophet of Jehovah, we had heard long before of his proposed coming and we were fully prepared to give him a hot reception. Why should he intrude himself and his counsels in our affairs? What right had Judah to send us any messenger? What right had Jerusalem to compare herself at all with Samaria? For a long time we had indeed been rival cities but that time was past forever. The father of our present King had led our victorious armies into Judah, he had captured Jerusalem and broken down her walls, he had despoiled her temple and palaces and brought many captives back to Samaria. Judah still existed and Jerusalem too, but largely through our generosity. Jerusalem had indeed the great Temple of Solomon, it fairly dominated the city, it cast its shadow upon her palaces, it frowned upon her pleasures, it restricted her plans, but so much more our reason to rejoice that we were free from its baleful influences. Then came our present King, the great Jeroboam; he carried our power far to the east, and the lands east of the Jordan and far south to the Dead Sea became tributary to us; they sent their flocks and herds, their gold and silver, their ivory and spices to enrich our city. Now Jeroboam was conquering our northern enemies and restoring and even enlarging the Kingdom of David and Solomon and making it our own. The Ten Tribes formed the real Kingdom of Israel; Judah with its

dependent tribe was too small and weak to compare with us. We held not only by far the largest but the richest portion of the land, the land that had not felt the touch of drouth since the time of Ahab, a land flowing with milk and honey. Judah need not send her prophet to teach us about the Lord God, she had no need to instruct us about him, she had an entirely wrong view of him.

We too might have erred in our former views of him but Jehu, the head of our present line of kings, had broken down the House of Baal in our city and now we worshiped Jehovah as represented in the Calf. The sculptured bull stood in the grove on the highest mound in our fair city, the symbol of prolific life, of pleasure and power. Surely Jehovah wanted his favored children to enjoy life to the full, he would not restrict and restrain them from luxurious living and wide dominion. Our great prosperity came from Jehovah and we could honor him only by enjoying it. Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet of Jehovah, had foretold the triumphs of Jeroboam, had really directed him in his conquests and so made plain to us all that Jehovah approved our worship of him. Had not the same Jonah been sent to Nineveh the capital of Assyria, that great power looming up in the far north-east which might sometime threaten our welfare, to denounce to them a message of destruction from Jehovah? And although Nineveh was spared for the present it was only spared because of its repentance, it would flourish only as long as it did not molest us; so we reasoned and confirmed ourselves in our proud views of our own prosperity and in our disdain of

Jerusalem. Then too we learned by probable report that this prophet of Jehovah coming to us was not one of the princes of Jerusalem, not even a citizen of the capital city, that he was only a farmer, a herdsman in the poor lands south of Jerusalem; and that he was not sent by any body of men either prophets, priests or rulers but was coming of his own purpose with a deep and irresistible conviction that he felt impelled to come.

So we waited his coming with hot resentment and disdain in our hearts.

Soon it was reported that he had entered the city and would address the people the next morning in the assembly square near the south gate. A great multitude of all classes gathered to hear him, curiosity to see what kind of a man he was and who attended upon him, was the leading motive that brought us together, though some of us thought perhaps there might be some importance attached to his message. The crowd excited itself speedily with mutterings of contempt for Judah and her herdsman messenger which soon became cries of scorn and bitter cursings. The more moderate among us became apprehensive of violence against him and his followers which would disgrace our liberal-minded city as if we were afraid to hear what our inferior neighbors could say about us, but our efforts to quiet the mob were vain, our hushings for silence were turned at once into many hissings of contempt and hatred.

Suddenly there came a great change over the crowd, the cursings and hissings were speedily subdued into respectful silence as a middle aged man came through

the door back of the platform and advancing alone stood facing the multitude. He was tall and well-built and of great dignity of bearing. With utmost selfpossession he looked over the surging, angry throng waiting for and thus seeming even to demand a hearing. His bravery awakened our admiration, his confidence in our being willing to hear him was itself a compelling appeal to us. When he began to speak his voice thrilled us, it was far-carrying, well modulated, clear, distinct and musical and his language was well chosen; this man might be a farmer but evidently he was no boorish man but one of fine powers and much culture.

His first words* claimed our fixed attention: Amos spoke not a word about himself, made no apology for his coming, not even an explanation of it but at once with deep solemnity and earnest sincerity entered upon his great message. "Jehovah will roar from Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn and the top of Carmel shall wither." We had always associated the thunder reverberating over the hills with the voice of Jehovah and here was an intimation that he would mainly judge the southern kingdom for that was more a land of shepherds, ours was an open country of cultivated fields of grain and our hills were covered with olive-orchards and vineyards, Carmel was ours truly but if only its top withered we could easily endure that. After a short but impressive pause Amos turned our thoughts far to our northern enemies where our King was now leading our armies. We could hardly be-

* Amos, the whole book.

lieve our ears when we heard him say with great fervor, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'For three transgressions of Damascus, yea for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron, and Syria shall go into captivity.'" So this prophet says our cause is just, for Damascus had threshed Gilead which belonged by right to us, we had recaptured it and we were now besieging Damascus and this prophet foretells we will capture it, that we will capture the palaces of Benhadad and that our victorious King will bring all the north border, all Syria, into captivity to us. Our people are quick to apply messages to others and are easily excited with good news and readily change their feelings; a little while before they were cursing the prophet; now they gave him wild approval, they waved their arms, they clapped their hands and shouted their applause. This is a great prophet, he says Jehovah will give us victory over our strong enemies and bring them into subjection to us. Amos now with the same fervor turned to our other enemies, first to the south, then to the north, then again to the far south and to the east, and with the same telling phrase, "Thus saith Jehovah, For three transgressions, yea for four," he threatened the punishment of God against Gaza, against Tyre, against Edom, against Ammon, against Moab. As he advanced he became more and more eloquent, carried along by his enraptured vision of coming judgment; and we too became fascinated with his conception of the glory of Jehovah as the ruler and judge of all the nations. In each case Amos gave the reason for the threatened punish-

ment, evidently he was well acquainted with the history of our people in the far off as well as in the near by past. In the early day Gaza and Tyre rejoiced in the effort of Edom to bring our whole people into bitter captivity, in more recent days our eastern neighbors Ammon and Moab had been exceedingly cruel in their warfare against us and in all the cases there had not been simply a single and solitary offence but many: "three transgressions, yea four." "Justice, justice," we cried under the spell of the eloquence of Amos "that is right, that is right, Edom deserves it, Moab deserves it, it is right, it is just."

The prophet had renewed our faith in the God of our fathers, in the great Ruler of all nations; and he had appealed to our slumbering conscience and aroused it to approve of truth and righteousness. To our unspeakable surprise Amos now, with great sadness but with intense passion, with tears in his voice, turned to his own nation, our rival nation, and using his choice phrase, now burned into our consciences, said, "For three transgressions of Judah, yea for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof. Because they have despised the law of Jehovah I will send a fire upon Judah and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem." Our consciences recognized the righteousness of the threatened judgment but now we could not break forth into shouts of approval as in the other cases, our feelings were subdued for we remembered that Judah, after all the hard rivalry of our recent separation, was still our brother.

Amos now at length brought his message home to us; with sorrow for us thrilling in his voice and still

with passionate earnestness as the prophet of the Most High he said, "Thus saith Jehovah, For three transgressions of Israel, yea for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof. Because they have sold the righteous for silver, they pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek." We listened in awe-struck silence, we could not do otherwise than listen. We seemed in the presence of Jehovah himself, the just Ruler of all the nations, Amos was his messenger, we listened as for our lives, we hung upon his words as they took possession of our consciences.

He did not rebuke us for worshiping our God by means of the Calf whose image in the grove crowned the highest place of our city; he did not denounce us as idolaters as if we had forsaken Jehovah, he acknowledged that we offered our worship to him; but he claimed that we made it the occasion of confirming ourselves in our transgressions against our brethren, in our losing all sense of brotherhood. He spoke as if Jehovah spoke through him, "I hate your solemn assemblies, I despise your feasts, I spurn your sacrifices and peace offerings. If you would truly worship me let judgment roll down as waters and righteousness as an overflowing stream through your streets and through your land."

Now there followed the swift and stern indictment of the injustice, the luxury, the licentiousness, the hardness of heart of our selfish indulgence; he did not mince matters, he did not seek to clothe grave faults with pleasing words but set them forth in their hideous nakedness. "Ye have no respect for family

ties nor for the virtue of young womanhood, ye do deeds of violence and lust.

"Ye hate him that speaketh uprightly, ye turn righteous judgment into gall and wormwood.

"Ye live in luxury, ye sing idle songs, ye drink wine in bowls, but ye have no sympathy for your afflicted brethren.

"Ye have houses of hewn stone, ye have beds of ivory, ye have pleasant vineyards but ye trample upon the poor, ye crush the needy."

Alas we felt that in these stern words he truthfully described what our great prosperity had wrought in us, that we had pursued pleasure and power recklessly and that in worshiping the sculptured bull we had cultivated and confirmed ourselves in sensuality.

The prophet recounted how many calls we had to turn from these low views of God as if he approved of our indulgent lives, and in the same telling phrase repeated time and time again, "Yet ye have not returned unto me saith Jehovah" he rebuked our persistency, there were indeed "three transgressions yea four"; and at length he cried aloud in a way that reached and awakened and troubled our conscience, "Therefore prepare O Israel to meet thy God." He now set before us with all the rapt gaze of the impassioned orator, vision after vision of advancing judgment, he entreated for us but in vain, Jehovah had passed an irrevocable sentence, we were to be carried away captive beyond Damascus.

We listened in silence, once only there was a fierce interruption. Amaziah the priest of Bethel threatened to send word to our absent King and he called upon

the prophet to fly back to Judah and confine his prophecy to that nation. The answer came quick and stern, "The King shall die by the sword; you, oh priest and your family, shall die in an unclean land. Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Jehovah has sent me, I came not of myself; he took me away from following my flock, he said, Go prophesy to my people Israel. I faithfully give you his message."

When Amos ceased speaking and left the platform we quietly went to our homes. There was much troubled sleep in Samaria that night as there has been ever since. The next day we supposed he would speak to us again, but when we inquired for him we learned that he was already on his way back to his home.

It was nearly four weeks after this that the second great oration that so deeply impressed us was spoken, and this was by one of our own people, a man in high position among us and greatly respected by all, but one whom we had never thought of as a prophet of Jehovah, nor had he even thought this of himself, as he told us, until a short time before he was forced by this feeling to speak to us. Some ten years ago Hosea the son of Beeri had married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, both were of noble families and of great wealth, and when he brought her as a bride to his palace the whole city shared in his joy. Gomer was a great beauty and of charming manners, she had many suitors but Hosea easily excelled them all in position, in manly qualities and bearing; they were both young and it was a marriage of ardent love. Within a few years three children were born, two boys

and a girl, and the happy home-life in the fair palace flowed buoyantly on.

Our women of noble rank are not kept in seclusion as is the case with some of our neighboring nations, they freely pass through our streets, meet in the assemblies of the people and take part in the public worship. Often Hosea and Gomer were seen on the plain before the sculptured Calf of Samaria, taking part in the dances before that shrine; they both loved pleasure and power and delighted in the worship of this God; she was a splendid dancer as was he, and the people admired greatly the abandon of their joy. Their palace was the center of gracious and luxurious hospitality and often large parties gathered there in dancing and feasting; and whenever the noble and the wealthy of other lands visited our proud city Hosea and his wife gave them hearty welcome and splendid entertainment. Gomer was queenly in her beauty, in her rich robes and flashing jewels she commanded admiration of all, and her wealth of passionate and happy spirits together with her free and charming manners fascinated those she wished to please; and Hosea by his ability and energy rose from place to place until he became the Governor of the city and next to the King in honor and power.

Some three years ago a great Prince of Judah visited Samaria with a large retinue and was entertained in the palace of the King. Much attention was paid to him by Hosea, he was a frequent guest at his palace and it was noticeable that he was specially fascinated by Gomer and was devoted to her company. One day Hosea visited one of his large estates on the

slope of the mountains toward the Jordan valley and spent the night there. When he returned the next morning he found the Prince of Judah with his retinue had left the city and had taken Gomer with him. Gathering a hundred horsemen he followed them in hot pursuit. At nightfall they, from a high hill, saw their encampment in the valley beneath; now a strange revulsion of feeling seized Hosea. He felt that he could easily destroy the seducer of his wife and capture her. But such a slaughter of her lover would be a hideous experience to her, a life-long horror and would hopelessly alienate her from him, and to have her person a captive in his palace and not her heart restored to him would sadden his whole life and that of his children. So he called back his eager horsemen and returned to his city and to his desolate home.

Speedy disaster came to the Prince of Judah, he fell under the displeasure of his king who confiscated all his property leaving only a single house near Jerusalem to his family, and sent him a captive to be held by his ally the King of Egypt. Gomer would now have suffered great hardship had not Hosea heard of her threatened distress and sent abundant provisions for her support. Gomer thought these provisions came from the Prince, her lover, until she discovered among those who brought the clothing and the olives one of her old servants in Samaria who told her Hosea had sent them. She learned also from him how Hosea had followed her and spared her, how he always spoke kindly of her to the children, and how eagerly he asked about her when they returned from bringing his gifts to her. She was so overwhelmed by this

constant love that she sent him a message asking if she could come back. Hosea came himself to her humble home near Jerusalem and brought her back to his palace and restored her to her place as his wife; and they were lovers again as before, the joy of their home-life being fully restored.

But Gomer could not help fascinating men; her remarkable physical beauty and form, her cheerful, happy spirits and her warm, passionate nature appealed to men; and it was not rare that a man of physical charm and ardent nature made a strong appeal to her. So the inevitable soon happened again. This time a member of an embassy from Damascus courted her and won her and she fled with him. But when she reached Damascus she found her lover had other wives, that she was the favorite but only one of many, and she soon wearied of him. So tremblingly she, with a few attendants, rode back to Samaria; and she entreated Hosea to receive her again into his home and his heart, which he was eager to do.

Both Hosea and Gomer were in the assembly and near to the platform when Amos gave his message from Jehovah, when he so sternly and faithfully denounced the self-indulgence that prevailed in our city and nation, and they like all the spell-bound crowd were greatly impressed.

The next day Hosea, with a few attendants, rode down the valley to the coast of the Great Sea to inspect that part of the country left in his charge by our absent King; and Gomer and her maidens gaily waved their farewells from his palace walls.

A week before this a wealthy Prince of far-off

Nineveh who had visited our city and had often been a guest of Hosea, had left us on his return to his own country and we thought he was by this time far beyond the borders of our nation. But toward evening of the day Hosea had left for the sea-coast this Prince returned. He threw himself at the feet of Gomer, told her he could not live without her, and pled with all his ardent love that she would share his life and fortunes. The next day she, this time taking her three children with her, fled with her lover to the north. Word was sent by a swift courier to Hosea, who at once returned.

But as before he did not pursue her to kill her lover and capture her, he would not force her to return as his slave, he could not satisfy his heart with anything less than her love. So he sent messengers after her; he wrote her a letter pleading with her by her sense of right, by her past experience, by the interests of his own and her children, and by his quenchless love for her to return to him. In a week's time the messengers returned, they had caught the flying pair at Tyre and had delivered his letter and his messages to Gomer. But Gomer would hardly read the letter or listen to their pleas; she seemed in a rapture of love with her Prince, her large, languishing eyes beamed only on him, her thrilling voice was all tenderness and longing for him; and she had so taught her children too, that they were eager for the excitement of a new life in reckless and splendid Nineveh. So they had gone on their journey; and his messengers returned without her and without any hope of her ever returning to him.

Hosea now confined himself largely within the walls

of his desolate palace. When he was called to exercise the powers of government, especially when he heard contested cases and passed judgment upon them, there was a strange mingling of sternness and leniency in him. He withdrew himself from all the busy scenes and the gay, joyous life of our city, and his closest friends could hardly obtain an audience with him. He had always been very popular, heartily sharing in all the pleasures and plans of our prosperous city; but now he retired from the people and was wrapped up in his gloomy thoughts and great distress. We all admired him and we shared in his heart-troubles, though there were many who could not sympathize with him in his sparing the lives of the seducers of his wife and in his retaining his love for her.

After some two weeks of this retirement Hosea sent out word through the city that he wished to speak at a certain hour the next day to an assembly of the people on the hill-top in the center of the city before the grove of the sculptured Calf.

Early the next morning the people assembled. The glorious sun never shone upon a fairer scene. Beneath us lay our large and prosperous city. On either side and before us, beyond the far limits of the city, rose the hills and mountains terraced to their tops with vineyards and olive-groves and among them the many villages of the farmers glimmering in the sunlight. Back of us stretched the broad valley for many miles with its meadows, its waving fields of grain, its prosperous villages, and far-off on the horizon one could catch a vision of the Great Sea. Before the grove stood the white marble statue, the sculptured

Calf of Samaria, looking down upon the prosperous city and the rich valley to the far-off sea. The Egyptians worshiped the sun as the source of life and of all living creatures they chose the bull as its favorite symbol. We were wiser than they, we worshipped Jehovah as the source of life, he gave the sun, itself, the power to shine, but we adopted the bull as the chief symbol of life, of all living beings the most prolific, most powerful, most pleasure-loving. Surely our worship had been greatly approved and richly blessed. Ours was a fruitful land; ours, a triumphant city; ours, a pleasure-loving people.

When we assembled before the Calf of Samaria we each one made obeisance to him, we prostrated ourselves before him as the source of all good to us. As we waited for Hosea we recalled to each other the many scenes of worship which he, the chief man of our city, had there shared with us and how he and the pleasure-loving Gomer had often led in the festal dance; and our spirits were subdued and our hearts saddened as we thought of him in his desertion and of her in the embrace of her false lover in a far-off land.

When at length Hosea came before us we noticed that he made no obeisance to the image of the bull and that he stood with his back to it as he spoke* to us.

His speech from beginning to end was a torrent of conflicting emotions, flaming in their strength. His voice sometimes rang with fierce anger and would quickly change to the tenderest and most yearning love; his eyes flashed with hot indignation or beamed

* Hosea, the whole book.

with touching appeal; every pose he took, every movement he made, all his intense action revealed a warrior striking down his enemies in battle or a mother gathering her children in her arms. He spoke freely to us of his wife and of her unfaithfulness to him, of his intense and burning indignation against her as she went after her false lovers and of his fierce anger against her seducers and then he told us how he could not cease to love her, how he could not, try as he would, tear her from his heart, how even now when there was no hope he hungered for her return, how he had appealed to her, how he would welcome her back; and that his failure, his hopelessness only seemed to deepen his love for her.

Then he told us that Jehovah had shown him how this experience of his for these few years, made intense now by the loss of his wife and children, was but a faint reflection of his own burning indignation and quenchless love for his people Israel who had, now for over two hundred years, been false to him and who were, at this very moment, given up to their false worship of the Calf of Samaria. He showed him how they knew in their hearts that he was the righteous and pure God and could not be at all represented in the lustful and dominant bull, that in worshiping the bull they had cast off all self-restraint, all obedience to God in righteous living and had given themselves up to self-indulgence in the wild pursuit of pleasure and the lust for wide and selfish dominion.

Thus he showed us how his own experience, known to us all, was the way God had taught him; and so commissioned him to be his prophet to us to make a

final appeal, he feared a hopeless one, to turn from the brutal bull and to come back to the righteous God. His own indignation against the faithless Gomer showed us God's indignation against us: "Ye are not my people, I will not be your God. I have cast off thy Calf, oh Samaria, it shall be broken to pieces. My anger is kindled against you; ye sow to the wind, ye shall reap the whirlwind. Woe unto them, they have wandered from me. Destruction to them, they have trespassed against me."

So his quenchless love for Gomer showed us God's quenchless love for us. "She decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, she went after her lovers and forgat me, saith the Lord. But I will allure her. I will speak comfortably to her. I will give her vineyards; and she shall make answer, she shall sing again as in the days of her youth. How can I give thee up, oh my beloved! I will take her in my arms, I will draw her with cords of love. Ye shall be my people, I will be your God." Then he made his final appeal to us. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Say no more to the work of your hands, Ye are our gods. Come back to him in whom the fatherless find mercy, he will heal your back-sliding, he will love you freely. He will be as the dew to Israel; ye shall blossom as the lily and cast forth your roots as Lebanon."

The effect of this faithful and earnest speech of Hosea was very disturbing to us. We had all condemned Gomer as giving free rein to her pleasure-loving nature and as being untrue to her faithful, loving, constant and self-sacrificing husband, untrue

to the noblest ties and to the highest obligations. While we sympathized with Hosea in his quenchless love there were many who would have heartily approved had he followed Gomer and her lovers with fierce vengeance. Now we had had forcefully applied to our own case that we were like Gomer in being false to the righteous and loving God, and of giving ourselves up to the self-indulgence of pleasure and power. We could not help feeling the truth of the charge and also fearing that, though God still loved us and appealed to us, we were so enamored of our worship of the Calf of Samaria that we would never return to God. We felt that as Gomer's character had been confirmed by her many treacheries and as she was now so involved in the condition of her own choice that she probably would never return to Hosea, so in the same way we were so fully confirmed and involved in our worship of the bull that we would never return to God.

So when the news came that Jeroboam had captured Damascus and was conquering the rich lands beyond the northern mountains, though the speeches of both Amos and Hosea filled us with strange forebodings of evil, we speedily and easily overcame them and gave ourselves up to popular rejoicing. We have chosen our lot: a life of pleasure and wide dominion, and come what may we will hold by our choice.

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF FOUR ORATIONS IN JERUSALEM, BY JOEL, MICAH, AND ISAIAH, IN THE TIME OF ITS GREAT PROSPERITY

A Letter from a Prince of Judah to the Archon of Athens

It is very difficult for some of us to see how the golden age can be any better than the present era. It is true that our history has been checkered: part of it splendid when good kings have ruled and the city has flourished, part of it shadowed with the rule of evil kings and with disaster coming even to our walls. But now for many years prosperity has been fully established. Our northern neighbor has prospered greatly and is living at peace with us; many of her best people visit us freely and attend the great feasts at the Temple, they are guests of friends in the city or encamp on the hills just outside the walls. That kingdom stands between us and the growing kingdoms farther north and so acts as our guard and defense from possible danger.

With the many years of peaceful development great wealth has come to us. While the city itself has grown large and splendid, a city of palaces, our country, under the thorough cultivation of small estates

has become very fruitful, a country of many bright villages of happy homes.

It is hard to understand the prophets: some of them promise a golden age, some of them threaten speedy ruin, and often the same prophet in the same speech will mingle both promises and threats. Many of these prophets find it difficult to gain a hearing but there was one a few years ago of such fine eloquence that crowds hung upon his words and there are two now living whom the people are always eager to hear though we may not approve or even fully understand their messages.

The speech of JOEL several years ago was made to the crowds attending the temple-service at the close of the evening sacrifice. It was one of the great feast-days and the full choir of a couple of hundred instruments and at least two thousand voices had just rendered one of the noblest temple songs. The court upon which the magnificent Temple stands is lifted a few feet above the court of the people. Here stands the Great Altar where the priests offer the morning and evening sacrifice for the whole nation. The choir of the Levites which assembled from all parts of the land on the feast-days was divided into two sections facing each other with the altar and the ministering priests between them while in front, facing both altar and temple was the large orchestra of trumpets, horns and flutes, of harps and drums. On such days the court of the people is crowded, ten thousand men and women filled the open space and the magnificent corridors surrounding it.

Well might our city be proud of such a scene: the

splendid Temple of Solomon with its lofty walls of white marble and its roof of pure gold flashing in the rays of the setting sun, the open spaces filled with a multitude of worshippers, the corridors of magnificent marble columns and golden roofs and the far-famed gates into the courts of the Temple upon which Solomon had lavished the wealth and genius of a nation. Well might our land be proud of our worship of the Most High God; all this splendid building, the wonder of the world, all the throng of people from city and country had but one purpose, to worship God. Surely our God must be pleased with such devotion to him.

The song the choir sang that evening was the Song of the Redeemed*: a few strong voices with the trumpets accompanying them, called upon all to praise the Lord for his goodness; then followed four responsive songs, one part of the choir taking the first, the other division taking the second. Each song began with a few plaintive voices, to the accompaniment of the flutes, describing men in distress; then a great appeal arose from many strong voices to God for help. Then the whole division of the choir with the accompaniment of all the instruments described the help given by God, and called upon all to praise him for his goodness. The four songs sung responsively by the two sections of the choir awakened an overwhelming spirit of praise and now the whole choir joined in a great chorus of song; this spirit spread irresistibly and soon the whole congregation was swept into the vast chorus of praise to God for his goodness, ten thousand voices with all the instruments rendering to

* Psalm, 107.

God the heart's adoration. No such music, we fondly believed, could be heard elsewhere on earth; and our souls were lifted to heavenly heights on the wings of song. This evening, too, there was a glorious sunset, the whole heavens were aflame with crimson and gold foretelling a fair tomorrow.

As the last note of the music died away in silence Joel stepped forth from the ranks of the Levites to the platform overlooking the court of the people* and began the great oration whose thrilling effect charms and ever will charm our minds and hearts, though we cannot claim that we fully understood it all or even approved that which we did understand.

He was a most dramatic orator. He seemed to call up to his side on the broad platform various classes of people and then make them speak to us the messages he desired to enforce upon us. He called up the old men to describe a disaster such as had not before been seen in their day; he called upon the young revellers, the drinkers of wine, to describe hostile armies conquering the land; he called upon the husbandmen to describe a country of vast desolation; he called upon the priests to lament in sackcloth that there was no offering for the house of God; he called upon the representatives of all the people to sanctify a fast, to call a solemn assembly and cry unto the Lord. "Alas for the day, for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

Then he, in his own person, poured out upon our terrified souls his vision of the approaching destruc-

* Joel, the whole book.

tion. Our fathers had described to us what their fathers had told them had occurred in their day, and we thought with the exaggeration incident to old-age describing a far-gone past, it was a terrible scourge of locusts that had darkened the sky as the night and completely devoured the land. Joel recalled this story of the locusts and in his vivid way depicted the coming of a great nation from the north whose vast armies should in orderly array and in irresistible strength spread over the land: "they march every one on his way and they break not their ranks, they leap upon the city, they run upon the wall, they climb up into the houses, they enter in at the windows like a thief, the earth quaketh before them, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, the land is as the Garden of Eden before them and behind them a desolate wilderness, yea, and none hath escaped them, a fire devoureth before them and behind them a flame burneth." The destruction by the locusts, exaggerated as it might be, was but a faint forecast of the complete and terrible destruction by the northern armies.

Joel now called upon us, as we rent our clothes and cried out in protests, "to rend our hearts and not our garments and to turn to the Lord our God." Then followed the most glowing description of the way God, if we turned unto him, would check and turn back the destroying armies and would greatly bless our land; and the glowing description of the blessing was almost as bewildering in its brightness as the threatened destruction had been terrible. But through it all there was a strange commingling of the darkness and the brightness, as if there was a grave doubt in his mind

as to whether we would turn to God and be blessed by him or would be overtaken with the incursion of the locusts, with the vast hordes of an irresistible and terrible foe.

This oration closed with a vivid description of the Lord calling upon all the nations: "Haste ye and come all ye nations round about and gather in the Valley of Decision, for there will I sit to judge all the nations, multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of Decision, for the day of the Lord is near." Our souls were filled with awe as he placed before us the great day of God judging all the nations. Joel declared that the wickedness of the nations was great and their judgment would be severe and he foretold that a holy nation would arise of those who found their refuge in God.

He had not denounced against us any great or special wickedness but he had implied that our worship was heartless and false and had exhorted us to turn to God. How had we ever turned away from him, were we not his worshippers? Was not this splendid Temple and this vast assembly even now engaged in the evening sacrifice? Was not this great swelling song of praise all in the honor of God? What was the meaning of the "rending of the heart," of the "turning to God," what the threatened disaster, what the glowing promise? We felt a vague unrest, as if we were not altogether right in God's sight, as if something were wanting in our worship, something defective in our great prosperity. Joel had brought before us in his graphic way the all-powerful and the all-seeing God and that God was looking upon us and judging us. The impression made by the eloquence of Joel

was disturbing to our conscience; it disturbed our good opinion of ourselves.

But the morrow, as the sunset had promised, was fair; the Temple was splendid and the worship magnificent. The city was rich, the nation prosperous and our great King ruled with kindness and firmness. Our equanimity returned as prosperous days continued, though our memories frequently recalled Joel's vivid visions of coming destruction, his earnest calls to turn unto God and his graphic description of God's judgment of all nations. We could not forget it if we would.

The two prophets now living whom the people are always eager to hear differ from each other in many striking ways, one is far superior to the other in eloquence, he is as far as we know the finest orator of all the nations; and both differ from Joel who passed from us a few years ago. Joel was a member of a highly educated class, the Levites, the teachers of the nation; he was one of the leaders of the great choir; he was a noted and cultured citizen of the capital city.

Micah was a countryman, the owner of one of the small estates some twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem toward the Great Sea, a prosperous farmer. It was the policy of our nation to maintain these small estates and to have them descend in the same family from generation to generation. Much of our great prosperity depended upon the attachment of families to their homesteads, upon the thorough cultivation of these small estates, and so upon the independence, contentment, virtue and happiness of our people. But

there was a tendency when great wealth accumulated in our capital city, for the rich families to desire country homes; these often were not contented with small estates, they must have parks of many broad acres and must dwell in large mansions.

Micah lived upon the sloping hills flowing down to the fertile plains along the Great Sea, a most attractive region of great abundance and splendid outlooks upon land and sea. He witnessed the gradual absorption of many small estates by the wealthy citizens of Jerusalem for their country homes. He saw the dire results that must follow, depriving many families of the means of gaining a modest living from the soil and withdrawing much land from profitable cultivation to become the pleasure grounds of the rich and thus defeating the policy of the laws inherited from Moses the great law-giver.

Micah also witnessed another evil tendency of our prosperous times. It was the policy of our nation, inherited also from the laws of Moses, to live in righteous dealings with our neighboring nations but not to rival them in luxurious living nor enter into political alliances with them. Micah lived upon the brow of the hill overlooking the only great highway between the empires of the north and east and the great empire of Egypt along the Nile; he saw the great caravans of the traders and the pomp and circumstance of princely wealth and of the political embassies passing to and fro over this highway of the nations along the plain by the sea. He also saw and with growing dislike, that Jerusalem in her wealth and pride was sending down to Egypt her traders, her

wealthy travelers and also her political embassies; and was receiving back from Egypt, not only corrupting manners of luxurious living but hopes of political alliances.

So his heart burned with indignation and he felt called of God to go to Jerusalem and rebuke these two evil tendencies of the times. When he came to the city and dwelt there long enough to observe many other tendencies of our great prosperity the flame of his indignation burned into a red hot passion that took full possession of his being.

His great oration* was spoken in the temple-courts at the close of the morning sacrifice, it was not a feast day and only the ordinary daily choir had rendered the morning hymn of praise, the attendance was mainly of our own citizens, numbering perhaps some three or four thousand, and was about to disperse in silence when Micah stepped upon the platform and shouted "Hear ye people the word of the Lord." He was of commanding form, his voice of great depth and power, he spoke deliberately but evidently with restrained passion, which while always controlled grew more intense, his choice of language was fine, his figures of speech were striking and at times he became vividly dramatic.

He began by describing the Lord coming in great majesty to visit judgment upon the northern nation of Israel, and then upon Judah for our nation had been corrupted by her neighbors to the north and to the south. He then in the plainest and most graphic language described our transgressions, none of us could

* Micah, the whole book.

misunderstand what the Lord had against us and the more prosperous among us, those generally regarded as specially favored, were most severely denounced as leaders in transgression. Our sins were not specially of worship, as Joel had intimated, but of injuring our weaker and less prosperous brothers. "Woe to them that devise iniquity and practice it because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them away; they oppress a man and his heritage; they cast out the women of my people from their pleasant houses, from their young children they take away my glory."

Not only in the country but in the capital city the strong in their prosperity crush and trample upon their weaker brethren. "The treasures of wickedness are in the house of the wicked, the abominable scant measure, the wicked balances, the bag of deceitful weights. Your rich men are full of violence, they have spoken lies, their tongue is deceitful in their mouth."

He then in the severest terms denounced the princes and leaders of the people for their bribery and self-seeking; men's faces flushed with shame and indignation as each looked upon the other as sharing in or approving such sins. "Ye heads, ye rulers, is it not for you to know judgment: but ye hate the good and love the evil, ye pluck off the skin of my people and eat their flesh, ye abhor judgment, ye pervert all equity; ye judges judge for reward, ye priests teach for hire, ye prophets divine for money, and yet ye say the Lord is with us." Then came the terrible threatenings of coming destruction. "Therefore shall Zion, for your sake, be plowed as a field and Jerusalem shall

become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest."

One of the most dramatic passages of his great oration was his description of the trial of all the nation before the mountains as judges. God summoned the people, he charged them with disloyalty to him, he called witnesses to show his faithfulness in all his dealings; the people were silent, they could make no answer. And then the mountains pronounced their judgment: "The Lord is not pleased with your temple-worship; ye know what is good, what he requires of you, do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God." Micah also described a coming time of great prosperity when all the people should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. This coming time would be under the reign of one born in the small town of Bethlehem, rising from the common people and his life linked with theirs from the far past; this King should be great to the ends of the earth and should bring peace to all the people.

Micah has made several such speeches to the temple-worshippers. There is a strange fascination about him. Whenever it is thought he will speak unusual throngs gather to hear him. Part of the attraction is that he is from the country and from the poor people while most of those attending the temple-worship are from the city and from the rich and noble classes. He criticises and denounces us but he is so plain spoken and earnest, so evidently sincere in believing that the Lord has sent him, so brave and faithful to his charge that he wins our respect; then too, we feel in our consciences that he is more than half right and that we

should have more respect for the rights of our lowly brethren and more humility toward God.

The other orator now living whom the people are always eager to hear is ISAIAH. He is an elegant and polished speaker but all his elegance only enforces the plain, clear message he brings to the crowds who hear him. He is a Prince of the royal family, a nephew to the reigning King; he lives in a palace almost equal in splendor to the palace David built, and when he comes to the Temple it is often in company with the King and the princes and officers of his court.

The Palace of Solomon crowns a neighboring hill to the Mount of the Temple, across the narrow valley between these hills there springs the splendid ascent by which the King goes up into the house of the Lord, the ascent which impressed the Queen of Sheba on her visit to Solomon, as one of the wonders of Jerusalem. This high path-way enters the portico of the Temple where the pillars are of the finest marble, their capitals of purest gold, which are called the Pillars of the King, by these the King and his court stand during the morning and the evening sacrifice. The platform upon which this glittering company stand is a few steps above the Court of the People and a single step below the Court of the Priests and open to the gaze of all assembled at the temple-worship. It is from this platform that Isaiah speaks. He speaks to the King and his court, to the priests and the choir of the Levites, and to the people of city and country who assemble for worship. Whenever the rumor spreads through the city that Isaiah is to speak throngs crowd to hear him, the Porch of the King, the Court

of the Priests and the Court of the People are all filled with eager listeners, a splendid audience to inspire to noblest eloquence the greatest orator our nation has ever known.

He is now* in the full maturity of his powers. It is perhaps twenty years ago that he described to us his call of God to give his message to the people, the awe-inspiring vision he had of God in his great Holiness with the seraphim covering their faces and their feet with their wings, and yet ready to fly to do his bidding.† We remember, who can ever forget, his youthful enthusiasm as he described to us the Golden Age God was ready to bring to his people which was delayed in its glorious coming only by their unworthiness, and how he urged us "O house of Jacob come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord." We are still thrilled as we recall his youthful energy as he denounced the luxury and profligacy of his times; his vivid description of the haughty princesses, the daughters of Zion "walking with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, mincing as they go and making a tinkling with their feet," so our nation was satisfied with its wealth and wanton in its pride; and how the Lord would strip off all this bravery, "the rings and jewels, the festival robes and turbans, and give a rope for a girdle and sackcloth for a stomacher," how he would give to the proud and wanton nation "branding instead of beauty."

Not only does Isaiah speak to the temple-worshippers, he has two other and widely different audiences.

* Isaiah, 6th chapter.
† Isaiah, 2–4 chapters.

He has always free access to the King and his court and often brings a special message from God to them, especially to the King exhorting him in all the affairs of state to have faith in God, in his presence and care, and to give to him loyalty and strict obedience. He also frequently addresses the populace in the streets and open places in the city, for there are many who never attend the temple-worship, who are so irreligious that they never even go through the forms of religion. It is very difficult to get a hearing from this large class of people for any religious message, and Isaiah has adopted some remarkable devices to bring to their attention the message God sends through him. To draw a crowd to hear him he has at times raised a broad tablet by his side, upon the black surface he writes a startling word in bold white letters, then when crowds come to see, he speaks upon this word and after that, holds them spell-bound by his eloquence. So at other times he lifts his young son upon his shoulder and speaks about him; or he sings a song in his high, clear voice until the crowd gathers; or he takes off his coat and his sandals and thus draws a crowd. All these methods effectively served his purpose.

During the past few weeks Isaiah has made two great speeches which have produced a vast impression upon the city: one he made in the street to the irreligious crowd, the other he made to the worshippers in the Temple.

Within the past twenty years a great change has come upon our northern nation, our brother-kingdom, Israel. That kingdom has at times been at war with us but generally has stood between us and the powerful

heathen kingdoms further north. After the death of their great King Jeroboam II, a number of weak kings have ruled; one of them in alliance with Damascus fought against us, but was easily driven back. But in recent years a greater kingdom has arisen north and east of Damascus and has shown its vast power both upon Syria and Israel. A former king of Assyria, Pul, had in a short war taken much gold, silver and jewels and carried them back to his capital Nineveh, making it a treasure-house of the spoils of nations. The present king, Tiglath-pileser, is a man of new ideas, and carries on his conquests in a far more terrible way, he takes possession of the lands he conquers and holds them as a part of his ever-enlarging kingdom; and to hold them firmly he carries away the best of their people as captives to other portions of his kingdom, and replaces them with colonists of his own people. Within the past few weeks rumors have come to us that this great king has thus captured all the northern portion of Israel; and while peace has been made, it gives promise only of a short duration, and then Assyria may sweep down and take possession of our sister-capital, Samaria, may sweep down even to our own borders. All is prosperous with us, Jerusalem flourishes, our nation is at peace with all other nations, but there is this threatening shadow from the north that darkens Israel and may advance even to Judah.

We expected that Isaiah would speak upon this great news, that he would give the people his statesman's view of it, that he would specially proclaim to us the message of our God concerning it; but we

supposed of course that his speech would be to the leading people, the religious people worshipping in the Temple.

But his first speech was to the irreligious populace.* The most crowded part of the city is where the street of the tent-makers opens into the bazaar of the silk and rug merchants, just beyond this is the street where the caravans from the East enter the city, and on the other side of the bazaar stretches the street where the poorest dwellers in the city find their rude homes. It was at the corner of these streets and the bazaar that, in the cool of the morning, Isaiah took his stand on a small platform and began to sing, in his far-carrying and musical voice, his Song of the Vineyard. Soon a great crowd gathered about him and he spoke to them concerning God's vineyard, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the men of Judah. He had cared for and blessed them; "and when he looked for grapes behold his vineyard brought forth only wild grapes; he looked for judgment but beheld oppression; for righteousness, but heard only the cry of the wronged." In plain but stinging words he showed the people their sins and pronounced woes upon them; "how the prosperous joined house to house ignoring the rights of their brethren; how the revellers inflamed themselves with wine and forgot their God; how the wicked sinned as with a cart-rope, how they called evil good and good evil, how they justified the wicked for a reward, how they took away the righteousness of the righteous by oppression." Then Isaiah, in his righteous indignation, declared that the Lord would lay waste his vineyard,

* Isaiah, 5th chapter.

that his anger was kindled against his people. "He will lift up an ensign to the nation from afar and will hiss for him from the ends of the earth. They shall come with speed swiftly, none shall be weary nor stumble, their arrows are sharp and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs are as flint and their wheels like a whirlwind, they shall roar like a lion and lay hold of their prey and carry it away safely, and there shall be none to deliver."

The effect was tremendous. Men tore their hair and rent their garments; they lifted loud voices in lamentation and fear; they fled through streets and bazaars to their homes and hid themselves; they seemed to see the enemy swarming over the walls of the city; they cried out as if the lion had laid hold of its prey. It soon spread through the whole city, this terrible threatening of the wrath of God by Isaiah. Fear took possession of all, an awful dread of coming disaster. The eloquence of Isaiah struck home to the heart of the people since their consciences condemned them for the sins he denounced.

A few days after this it was rumored through the city that Isaiah would speak in the Temple at the close of the evening sacrifice. It was not a feast day, only the ordinary choir of three hundred voices and forty instruments was in attendance and only a few priests were needed to offer the daily sacrifice, but in order to hear Isaiah the high-priest and his attendants and all the Levites in the city, the teachers, the judges and the lawmakers of the people crowded the Court of the Levites. The Court of the People was also crowded and especially the Porch of the King's pillars

where stood the King and the princes in attendance upon him. The choir had just ended the evening song of praise and the high-priest had just spread forth his hands and pronounced the blessing of God upon the people, when Isaiah came forth from the princes attending the King and began his address. His clear ringing voice could be heard easily in the still evening air by those farthest removed from him, his eyes flashed their meaning upon princes, Levites and people as he turned from one to another; his form, as he stood still or moved about upon the platform, and all his gestures were instinct with feeling; the whole man spoke and swayed us at his will.

His great speech had the wide sweep of a statesman's vision; we saw, as he made us see them, nations rise and fall; it had also the keen insight of a prophet of God watching his unfolding plans; and he made us see that in God's plans righteousness would be triumphant while wickedness wherever found could bring only disaster.

He began by describing the land of Zebulun* and the land of Naphtali, the portions of our brother-kingdom of Israel which had just been captured by Assyria, beautiful and fruitful lands at the feet of the great mountains and now those lands were swallowed up by a triumphant heathen nation. Then he described that there would arise a great light upon those lands dispelling all the present darkness. This light he described in the most bewildering way as coming from a child, a son of our people, chosen of God; he gave him names which were far beyond our

*Isaiah, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th chapters.

powers even to imagine: Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; he assured us that of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end for it would be established through judgment and righteousness even forever; "the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

Now by a swift transition he brought us back from this splendid vision of the far future to the present condition: and this not only of Israel but of our own nation and of Jerusalem itself. This condition was the reverse of righteousness, and wickedness would surely bring disaster. In four stinging indictments he associated us with our northern brethren, they were already feeling the rod of God's wrath, we would soon feel it also. "Pride and stoutness of heart, rejecting God's righteous law, bring the enemies that devour with open mouth." Impenitence, profane and evil doings and folly awaken God's anger: "Wickedness and cruel, selfish oppression of one's brother bring of their own nature, punishment and disaster." The last indictment was specially severe: "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, that write perverse things, that turn aside the needy from judgment, that take away the right of the poor, that make widows their spoil and the fatherless their prey, they shall bow down under the prisoners and shall fall under the slain." He turned in righteous indignation to the Levites, to the princes, to the people, and as each indictment closed with its appropriate punishment he spoke a ringing refrain, as if he knew all were in vain, that the wickedness was persistent: "For all this

his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

He now represented God as calling for the Assyrian, the nation already triumphing over our brethren, to be the rod of his anger, the staff of his indignation against our profane nation. God gave him the charge "to take the spoil, to carry away the prey, to tread us down like the mire in the streets." Then he described how the Assyrian in his pride and cruel strength would sweep over the land; he made us see as he saw in his rapt vision, "he is come, he is passed through, he layeth aside his baggage, he has gone over the pass, he taketh his lodging, the people gather only to flee, he halts, he is here, he shaketh his hand at the hill of Jerusalem."

Then when our hearts were filled with fear and horror Isaiah's whole manner changed, he seemed to have a glorious vision of a great rescue; there was a swift transition of thought and feeling as he told us again of a child to be born, a shoot from the stock and a branch out of the roots of Jesse: and he described the reign of this far-coming King, "his delight shall be the fear of the Lord, he shall defend the poor and the weak with equity, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked, righteousness and faithfulness shall be his clothing." There will follow peace and prosperity beyond the dreams of the earth, for his shall be the reign of the righteous King and all the nations of the earth shall praise him.

The evening shadows were gathering fast over the city as we went down from the Temple to our homes, many were the heart-searchings and the head-shakings

as we conversed with one another on the way. Was our unrighteousness as bad as Isaiah charged? Had we not been this very evening giving our God the most splendid worship in the most splendid Temple? Were not the riches of the city, the prosperous country, the peaceful nation, the indications of God's great favor to us? The great nation of the north had indeed treated our brother-nation with severity, doubtless they deserved it, but he was surely a great way off from us. There might indeed come a time in the far future when a child, through righteousness, would exert a wide and peaceful sway, Isaiah's vision was beautiful, even glorious; it might some day in the far future come to pass; but for us the present was good enough. We were not very bad; how could we always be thinking of the rights of others, of the poor and the weak? Must we not look out for ourselves? Each for himself in the affairs of life; and if we maintained the Temple and its worship surely God would be pleased with us.

Besides we have Isaiah, the statesman, the prophet, the splendid orator still with us and in the prime of life; should there come need he will often, as in the past, give us the benefit of his counsels and his visions.

SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER V

The Book of Isaiah

Arrangement in the book of the speeches of Isaiah

Part I. Isaiah a young man. Uzziah and Jotham the kings. About 740 B. C. Judah has had disasters in the past, now is prosperous but corrupt.

Chapter 1. Temple Speech: passionate rush of feeling describing corruption and past disaster with a call to present reformation and a glowing promise of forgiveness.

Chapters 2, 3, 4. Temple Speech: the Golden Age Speech: glowing description of walking in God's ways, stern denunciation of their evil ways, even the women are corrupt, assurance that a righteous life will bring prosperity from God. The lure of the Golden Age both at the beginning and the end of the speech.

Chapter 5. Street Speech: singing draws a crowd, a parable of a vineyard. It brings forth wild grapes, six woes pronounced upon the wild grapes. God calls an army from the north to sweep over the vineyard.

Chapter 6. Isaiah describes his call to be a prophet and it confirming him amid discouragement. Isaiah's favorite title of God "The Holy One of Israel," almost peculiar to him, evidently arises from this call.

PART II. Isaiah in his prime, in middle age. Ahaz and Hezekiah the kings, about 722 B. C. Judah is invaded by Israel and Syria, and again is freed. Israel is invaded by Assyria and at length Samaria falls and Israel is taken captive. The northern kingdom is destroyed, becomes a part of Assyria.

Chapter 7. Speech in the presence of King Ahaz and his court: exhorts him to take the shield of faith and be calm, promises the speedy driving back of Syria.

Chapter 8. Street Speech: uses the black-board with words on it meaning "speed, spoil, hurry, pray" to draw, startle and impress the crowd; tells them that while freed from present danger Assyria will soon sweep over Israel and come down near to Jerusalem

Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12. Temple Speech, the Naphtali Speech described in the letter.

Chapters 13-23. Prophecies against neighboring heathen nations, evidently extracts from speeches to the people to strengthen the faith of the just among them when heathen nations were apparently more victorious and prosperous than Judah.

Chapter 20 shows a device of Isaiah going in his shirt sleeves and bare feet at times to draw the attention of the irreligious multitude to his speeches.

PART III. Isaiah becomes an old man, the old man eloquent. Hezekiah the king about 711 B. C. The northern kingdom is now a part of Assyria. Judah is invaded by Assyria, Sennacherib besieges Jerusalem.

Chapters 24-27. Temple Speech: alternate descriptions of judgment and salvation, the judgment fearful, the salvation glorious, increasing in feeling till one can hear the groans of those suffering judgment and the songs of those enjoying salvation; a strong commingling of impending disaster unless the nation repents, and of a future glory to those who obey God.

Chapters 28-35. Seem to be notes or sketches of various speeches in the temple courts of this period and several quite full extracts of polished orations. The general bearing of these speeches is to encourage the faithful when danger seems impending and to warn the corrupt among the people of a sure if not immediate disaster. Whatever the condition of each day the living issues were religious, not mainly religious observances but religion in a righteous life.

Chapters 40-66 are described in chapter 13 as lofty oratory breaking forth into poetry.

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF THREE ORATIONS IN JERUSALEM, BY ZEPHANIAH, HABAKKUK AND JEREMIAH, ON THE EVE OF ITS DESTRUCTION BY NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Letters of the Princess Zebidah in Jerusalem and Her Husband, the Prince Azariah, a Captive in Babylon

The Princess Zebidah to Prince Azariah:

When the last gleam of the spears sank beyond the hills north of the city my heart seemed to die within me. That I should be left here and my husband be carried a captive by our enemies to far off Babylon seemed more than I could bear. It was only the care of our young children and the expectation of another child that at all reconciled me to my hard lot; it seemed my God-given duty to remain in our palace while you faced the long march alone. It may cheer your lonely heart to know another son has been given us; the baby, the very image of his father, is strong and well and I am a proud mother, in splendid health, and as happy as I can be with my husband so far away.

Our city is speedily recovering from its terrible siege and capture. Our King is of David's line and though he rules under the sway of Babylon he seems of an independent spirit and is arousing the people to

the same independence. The Temple has been repaired and refurnished and the people assemble for worship and the priests minister at its altar as before it was desecrated. While there are a few who feel that we have not reformed, as a nation, from our evil ways and that more terrible disaster threatens, the great mass of the people hold that we have suffered enough, more than our due; that we have reformed enough, all that could be required of us and that we are on the eve of great prosperity. They expect the speedy return of our captives from Babylon, that our nation will soon break off its foreign yoke and that our God will soon show plainly that we are still his favored people. I wish I could believe all this for oh! how I wish for the quick return of the captives! Do you remember, Beloved, when we heard together the great oration of ZEPHANIAH in the courts of the Temple? All was fair in our lives then, we had just been married, the festivities of our two princely and wealthy families were the pride and delight of the city; and you and I were among the Temple worshippers that day with our love and joy voicing themselves in songs of praise to our God. All was prosperous in our fair land under the reign of the good King Josiah and the Temple courts were thronged with worshippers. We were surprised when our friend Zephaniah stepped from the group of princes surrounding the king and reaching the platform of the priests began to speak to the people. We had honored him as one of the noblest of men but had not thought of him as a prophet, but now as he began to speak there was that indescribable something in the bearing of his person,

in the flash of his eye, in the tone of his voice* that proclaimed he had a message from God to us. What a heart-searching message it was! He charged the people with worshipping the host of heaven upon the house-tops, with worshipping the gods of other nations, with worshipping even their own king equally with God himself. He turned to rebuke the King's sons and the princes, arrayed as we were in foreign apparel, for adopting the manners and customs of idolaters. He charged the high and low alike with violence and deceit, with licentiousness and fraud breaking down even the sanctity of the home. He represented God as searching Jerusalem with a candle and finding only those who, in their hearts, felt that God was indifferent to good and to evil. He then called upon all to recognize the presence of the Lord who cares for purity of worship and the resulting purity of life above all else.

Having revealed to us as by a flash of lightning the prevailing corruption, he denounced upon city and nation the terrible judgment of God. It was impending. How his words still ring in my memory! "The day of the Lord is at hand, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and against the high battlements, a day of distress among men who shall walk like blind men because they have sinned against the Lord, and their blood shall be poured out as dust."

Alas, alas, though there were many who were true

* Zephaniah, the whole book.

in their hearts to God, you and I among them I know, though there were many who turned unto God in true repentance, still the nation was not touched; and Zephaniah proved himself the herald of the coming storm. In less than a year from that day of warning the good King Josiah, then an ally of the Assyrians, had been killed in battle and his son and successor had been captured and carried into Egypt and our nation had become tributary to Egypt.

That was indeed "a day of darkness and gloominess" but it was quickly followed by "the day of clouds and thick darkness." The great King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, with his fierce army had captured Nineveh, he swept down over Assyria and fought against Egypt and conquered it, and we became tributary to Babylon. He took back with him to Babylon some of our finest young men. Do you remember what a splendid boy Daniel was? And your cousin, bearing your own name, was almost as noble in his youthful beauty as you were when I first fell in love with you.

After a few years came our fierce rebellion against Babylon under our King Jehoiakim and our "day of thick darkness" was followed by "the day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and the high battlements." Nebuchadnezzar with his great victorious army drove our armies before him with terrible slaughter and shut them up in Jerusalem and then he laid siege to our fair city. Bravely you led your men, bravely all the princes and their men fought for our king and nation; and we women cheered you on; but all was in vain. The walls were broken down,

Nebuchadnezzar and his fierce army entered the city, and we were in his power.

When he returned to Babylon he took with him many captives, the noblest of the land; he took you, my beloved. What is your fate in that far-off land, among your enemies, the strange, fierce and powerful race who have conquered us? What are you doing among them? What are you enduring there?

Is the day Zephaniah described "the day of wrath, the day of trouble and distress" almost over? You remember he closed his great oration with a description of a day when the nation should return with the whole heart unto God. In what glowing terms he described it, "The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love for thee, he will rejoice over thee with singing." Oh that the day of light and gladness would speedily dawn, that the captivity might return with joy, that you, oh beloved, might be returned to my arms and to your children. But there are many who fear a still greater darkness and distress; for the nation, they say, has not yet returned with the whole heart unto God.

It was only this morning after the daily sacrifice that I heard another great oration in the Temple courts. The scene was far different from that when you and I, in our happiness, heard Zephaniah: the court of the king and the princes was then crowded with a glittering throng of noble men and women. This morning our King Zedekiah was standing by the splendid King's Pillar of Solomon but he seemed gloomy and depressed, and there were but few princes

standing about him; we could not help thinking of the many princes and great men who were captives in far-off Babylon. Neither was the court of the people crowded with happy, prosperous worshippers as in that day when we looked out upon them; many of that gathering, the most wealthy and the most skillful, were also captives in Babylon.

The Priests had ministered at the Altar and the large choir, with the many instruments of music, had rendered one of the most joyous songs of praise, but there seemed little heart in the singing and the ministering: all lacked the exuberance of joyful praise of the so recent past when you and I together were carried along in its exultation. The ministering priest had just pronounced the benediction, giving the blessing of God to his people, and we were turning to leave the Temple when there stepped forth from the Court of the people a tall, dignified man and, reaching the platform, he beckoned to the people to hear him. Many of the people seemed to know him and to hold him in high regard, and quickly turned to listen to him; but very few of the princes seemed to have any interest in him and were detained only by a vague curiosity to hear one of the people speak. I afterwards learned his name was HABAKKUK and that he was one of the most upright business men of the city and a man of fine culture, a man righteously indignant against wrong and injustice however successful they might be, whose sympathies were heartily enlisted in favor of those who were unjustly oppressed.

It was the most dramatic speech* I have ever heard,

* Habakkuk, the whole book.

and all were soon listening as for our lives. He did not seem to be speaking to us at all though every word could be easily heard and there was thrilling pathos in his voice. He looked up into the clear sky and seemed to be speaking to God. Then he listened to some mysterious voice and repeated what it said to him, what God said to him; but even this word of God did not seem to be for all of us, but only for him and for those like him.

He began by expostulating with God, "O Lord how long shall I cry unto thee of violence and thou wilt not save? Why dost thou allow iniquity to prosper and judgment to be perverted, and the law to be slack and the wicked to compass the righteous, and strife and spoiling to triumph?" While he did not speak directly to us we began to feel that he was speaking to God of us, and we began to tremble, and to wonder what God thought of us, what he would say in reply. Then HABAKKUK paused and listened. Soon he seemed to hear a voice from the bending heavens and he repeated to us what he heard. Jehovah says, "I will call the Chaldeans again, that bitter and hasty nation; their horses are swifter than leopards and more fierce than the evening wolves; they fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour; they come for violence; they gather captives as the sand." Habakkuk was cast down by this message, so were all who heard him.

But he soon recovered his spirit, he straightened to his full height and looking up into the clear heavens he began to expostulate with God. "O Lord my God, thou holy one, thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil, how canst thou call the wicked to swallow

up the man that is more righteous than he?" We listened awe-struck. That which had often troubled us, that the worshippers of false gods, that the fierce Chaldeans should be allowed to conquer us, the worshippers of the one true God: that they who were so much worse than we, bad as we were, should crush us, and our God look calmly on and permit and even seem to approve their cruel oppression: we could not understand it, but we had hardly dared to think of it; we certainly never dared to speak to each other of it; and here was one of our number who dared to look up into the heavens and say to God himself, "How can you call the Chaldeans, so much worse than we, to triumph over us?"

Then Habakkuk paused again, now for a much longer time; he looked up into the heavens as if he were gazing on tremendous scenes and listening to a wonderful message; when he began to speak it was as if he were talking to himself of what he saw and heard. "The Lord has taken me up as into a high tower, I am looking out upon his plan among the nations, the great unfolding of his purpose in his appointed times. I am standing by him who orders all great movements among men, I cannot hinder them, nor can anyone, but he is explaining them to me. Bad as we are, the Chaldeans are worse than we; God knows it, and does not approve of them; he simply is using them to accomplish his purposes which are righteous and true altogether. There is a wide sweep to his great plans, there is a far-off consummation which he is bringing about; from all the present confusion and great disaster there will arise a kingdom of faithfulness to God

and to man, a kingdom of peace and prosperity. In the present distress, in the greater distress soon to come, the just man can be independent of his surroundings, he can live by his faith, he can look up to God and trust him, he can look into the future and know that God will bring about his kingdom of righteousness."

Then Habakkuk took a lofty flight of eloquence. He seemed to be standing by the throne of the Ruler of the nations. He denounced woe after woe against evil-doers whoever they were and however triumphant in the present: "Woe to him that increases that which is not his, woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, woe to him that succeedeth by violence even in building a city, woe to him that maketh his neighbor drunken, woe to the maker of dumb idols. However they may prosper the Lord is against them, he will use them to bring about repentance, he will throw down the persistent in wickedness, he will establish his kingdom in righteousness." Habakkuk closed his wonderful oration with the loftiest expression of his confirmed faith in God. He described the glorious majesty of God as he had revealed himself and his plans to the prophet upon his high tower overlooking the nations; he described him as "threshing the nations in his anger, as going forth for the salvation of his people" while the whole earth was filled with his glory. "Whatever shall be the distress" said the prophet "however great shall be the disaster coming upon us, I for my part will hold fast to God: though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields

shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The effect of this great speech upon the multitude was various. We all of us felt that we had heard the verdict of God upon our character: that the nation had not repented of her transgression, that darker days were coming upon us, that the day of wrath was drawing nigh when God would call again the Chaldeans to oppress us. Many went down from the Temple-courts with frowns on their faces, muttering their wrath, with rebellion ruling in their hearts. Many talked of reforms that were needed and that should be immediately undertaken. Many tore their garments, covered their heads and sobbed out their repentance, and called aloud upon God for mercy. I for my part, and there were some I have learned who felt like I did, had a strange exaltation of spirit, I felt with Habakkuk that whatever befell us I would trust in God. I had a strange feeling that I was standing in God's presence, that he was explaining to me his purposes, that he was asking me to trust him, that he was assuring me of his watchful care. So I write to you about this great oration. May you, beloved, in far-off Babylon, have unshaken faith in the God of our salvation. May you, a captive in a strange land, and I, dwelling in this stricken city, be conscious of God's presence with us and trust him. We cannot joy indeed in our sorrowful separation and our uncertain future, but may we joy in the Lord, the God of our salvation.

Prince Azariah to the Princess Zebidah

An opportunity has arisen for me to send you a letter. Can it be that nearly half a year has passed since I saw your dear face? But I will not fill your heart with sadness by recounting my sorrows and loneliness. I know that you and the children are safe in the care of King Zedekiah who rules under the strong sway of Babylon, and I think often of you and them protected and comfortable in our home palace, under the shadow of the great Temple of God. This is not only a land far off but a strangely different land from the home land. When I go upon the house-top and look toward Jerusalem, and then look all around beyond the bounds of the city, there is not a mountain in sight not even a hill, we are living on a boundless plain. After passing through beautiful Damascus we journeyed several days northward and then turned to the east. The country became more level but we could see the great mountains on the horizon; at length we could see only their blue outlines and snow-capped Hermon rising above them, then we lost them altogether. Our journey then followed a great river, and the hills along its great plain were far off and constantly receding until long before we reached Babylon we pursued our weary march through a boundless plain.

Babylon itself is a vast city stretching out many miles along the great river. In its center there is a great mound, a hill made by the labor of men's hands, and on this hill there is a magnificent temple where they worship their gods. Our conquerors are tolerant of the worship of their captives of our and of other

races, we are allowed to worship our God; but theirs is only a kindly tolerance of our ignorance, for they say our God is only a local god, confined to our homeland, and not able to defend even his own land against the power of their gods.

On the gentle rise from the plain to the mound of the temple are builded the great palace of King Nebuchadnezzar and the many palaces of the princes and the wealthy men of the city. I live in one of these palaces, my beloved, and I have no harsh treatment nor any real hardship for while I am a captive I have become almost a companion of Istaroch, one of the wise-men of the Chaldeans. His palace looks over the river and his fine garden stretches down to the water's edge. There are many slaves in the palace and they are all eager to do my bidding. But I do not see the wise-man's family, he has no sons and his wife and daughters live in their part of the palace, and whenever I catch a glimpse of them in their side of the garden, they are heavily veiled. The eunuchs who wait upon them tell me they are charming women, beautiful in face and figure, clad in rich garments and of most gracious manners.

The wise-man has great knowledge on many subjects, has read many books, and I respect and admire him for his vast learning and noble spirit. His house is full of books, great piles of the brick books of the national history and literature and many rock slabs and papyrus rolls of other nations, of Egypt and even of our own land. I have charge of this vast library and he often consults me upon the great subjects of his studies. He associates me with him also in his study

of the stars, and we spend many hours together on his house-top at night looking up into the clear heavens.

Only two weeks ago a strange thing happened which for days filled my heart with dreadful foreboding but which has turned out to quicken my faith in our great God. Istaroch and the other wise-men of the Chaldeans were summoned to the presence of Nebuchadnezzar and I attended upon him. When they had bowed themselves before the great king he said to them in stately language to this effect: "I have had a dream which troubles me, I have entirely forgotten what it was; so I have summoned you to tell me the dream and its interpretation." Then Istaroch answered, "If you will tell us the dream we will tell you its meaning, but it is too much to require of us to tell you the dream itself, the wisest of men cannot do that." Then the king grew angry and frowned upon the wise-men and dismissed them with the command: "Tell me the dream by tomorrow at this hour; if you fail I will command that you all be slain, your families banished and your property confiscated." There was great excitement in the city that night for the wise-men were highly regarded, almost worshipped by the people. I was astounded at the selfcontrol of Istaroch; he had no word to say against the king, he seemed willing to die at his command without a sign of rebellion; and he spent the night in giving instruction to the eunuchs for the care of his family, and in making preparations for his death upon the morrow. When the morrow came and Istaroch and the wise-men were about to assemble to confess to the king their failure and to await the execution of his sentence, there came

a messenger from the king granting a delay of three days and saying this was upon the appeal of Daniel, one of the captives of Judah, who had assured the king that he would entreat his God to reveal the secret. The three days of waiting were days of intense excitement not only among the wise-men but in the whole city. The wise-men confessed their lives were entirely dependent upon the God of Daniel, that all their learning was in vain and their own gods could not or would not help them. The citizens of the world-conquering city were equally bewildered; they attributed their victory over all other nations to their superior wisdom and power as displayed especially in their king and in his wise-men, and to the superior power and favor of their gods who had set the gods of all other nations at naught; and they had a special contempt for the God of captured Judah, the god of the hills they called him; and now the lives of their wise-men, whom they honored and worshipped, were entirely dependent upon this condemned and vanquished God. There was a strange commingling of hope and despair; the despair was heavy, dark, oppressive; the hope was like a single beam of light trying to break through the darkness. Could it dispel the darkness? Would the god of the hills save the wise-men of Babylon?

The suspense became intense, all other affairs and interests in the city were forgotten. Could the god of the hills, would he save the wise-men of Babylon? Could he, would he reveal to the great Nebuchadnezzar his forgotten dream?

On the third day Daniel* stood in the presence of

* Daniel, the 2d chapter.

King Nebuchadnezzar, he told him that not because of his learning but only because of his appeal, the God of heaven had revealed to him the king's dream. With the most serene confidence he then described to the king his own dream which he had entirely forgotten. He had dreamed of a great image whose head was of gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. The king had then dreamed of a great stone cut without hands, differing from the hewn stones of the city of Babylon, this stone smote the image to powder so that the wind carried the powdered image away and the stone then became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The king was astounded! It was in every detail the very dream that had troubled him and which he had entirely forgotten. Daniel then told the king the meaning of the dream. The God of heaven had revealed to the king the succession of kingdoms he would set up in the earth: he had given to Nebuchadnezzar the present kingdom, he was the head of gold; then would follow a succession of baser kingdoms through long ages; at length the God of heaven would raise up a kingdom of strange and small beginnings which would sweep away all the remains of the other kingdoms and would grow and flourish until it filled the whole earth, it would last forever, the kingdom of the God of heaven, the everlasting and universal kingdom of heaven in the earth. The God of heaven has revealed to thee, oh king, his wide and far-reaching plans. The effect was wonderful, never had such a thing been dreamed. The great King Nebuchadnezzar

fell down upon his face before Daniel and acknowledged with utmost and fearless frankness, "Of a truth your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings, the great revealer of secrets." Then the king established Daniel in honor, wealth and vast authority and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and a member of the king's court. The wonderful scene soon became known through the whole city; the wise-men were saved; the king had acknowledged the God of Daniel as the God of gods, the God who had revealed the forgotten dream, who had revealed the long succession of kingdoms to come, the Lord of kings who ruled in the whole earth, whose far-reaching plans covered the whole future.

It is impossible to describe the bewildered feelings apparent in this capital city of the world's empire; their gods are seen to be powerless in a great emergency, our God is acknowledged as the great God over all. Still they are in the ascendancy, we are still captives, but they treat us now with a growing consideration and respect. But their bewilderment is as nothing compared with ours. When the wonderful speech of Daniel became known we thought our captivity would at once end, but the days have passed with no sign of a change. The sun rises and the sun sets upon a race of captives and Babylon still triumphs over us. But, oh my beloved, I am slowly learning the lesson: our God is here as well as in Jerusalem, he is carrying out his far-reaching plans, though we cannot understand him thoroughly we can still trust him, he will care for you, he will care for me and for all those who trust him. Let us live in this faith.

The Princess Zebidah to Prince Azariah

Strange things are happening in Jerusalem and to our greatest prophet, JEREMIAH. You remember, beloved, when you and I heard him make his great speech* in the temple-court, when he threatened the judgment of the righteous God against the temple itself because of the sins of the people? You remember how he burst forth in his terrible denunciation: "Trust ye not in lying words; the temple of the Lord the temple of the Lord, say ye, as if the temple could protect you; ye steal and murder and commit adultery, ye swear falsely, ye have made the temple, my house, a den of robbers; wherefore amend your ways or I will do to this house, wherein ye trust, and to the place I gave unto you as I have done to Shiloh: I will cast you out of my sight." How proud I was of you, my husband, and of the other princes that day, for when the prophets and the priests and the mob of the people in their wrath clamored for Jeremiah and were about to kill him, you and the princes sprang to his rescue and, at the risk of your lives, persuaded the people that he was not worthy of death since he had spoken in the name of the Lord. That was a terrible scene and a fearful speech: for when a few days afterward you and I rode our horses over Shiloh and saw the ruins of the city and that the whole country about it was desolate and without an inhabitant, we shuddered to think that such would be the fate of Jerusalem and of the splendid Temple of Solomon.

Rumors of the strange things happening in Jerusalem have already reached you, and rumors have

* Jeremiah, 7–10, also 26th chapter.

reached us that Nebuchadnezzar has gathered a great army and is marching toward us to subdue our rebellion. Zedekiah, the King of David's line, is awakening great enthusiasm among the people to cast off the dominion of Babylon, and many prophets are siding with him and promising him victory and the return of the captives. During the growth of this spirit in the past few years and now that it is flaming forth in open revolt, Jeremiah steadfastly opposes it and counsels submission and loyalty to Babylon. He urges the nation to strive to reform its evil ways rather than to struggle against outward foes. He says that our fathers prospered and were free because they did justice, they defended the poor and needy, that this is the way to know the Lord and to live in his favor; and if the whole nation refuses this it will be destroyed, not only will Jerusalem be again captured but it will become desolate, without inhabitant; and he counsels all who love their country and are loyal to their God to live in righteousness with each other and in submission to Babylon. He is a strong man and a brave one and very eloquent in speech and he embraces every hopeful opportunity to check the impetuous rush of the nation to its ruin. Often he speaks in the temple-courts and often he strives to reach and influence those masses of the people who rarely worship at the temple. A year or more ago he took a potter's earthen bottle and, gathering a great crowd of people at the gate Harsith in the Valley of Hinnom, he told the people that unless they reformed the Lord would destroy them beyond repair just as he cast the bottle upon the rocks and broke it into many pieces. This so enraged

the priest, Pashur, the chief officer of the temple, that he had Jeremiah arrested and put in stocks in the gate of the temple where he was subjected to suffering, insult and shame until he was released the following day.

A short time after this Jeremiah made a heavy and cumbersome yoke and put it about his neck and, this drawing a multitude to hear him, he counseled them to submit to the yoke of Babylon. This so enraged Hananiah, who claimed to be a prophet of the Lord, that he prophesied that God would speedily break the yoke of Babylon, and he then rudely broke the yoke off of Jeremiah's neck. But nothing daunted, Jeremiah told Hananiah he was a false prophet and that God would make a yoke of iron that the people could not break off of their necks. Not only does Jeremiah thus faithfully counsel the people but when called before the king he is equally fearless; only a few days ago Zedekiah, who had heard that Nebuchadnezzar was coming with a large army to war against us, called Jeremiah to reveal to him the will of the Lord. The brave prophet told the king the message of the Lord: "I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath; I will deliver Zedekiah, his servants and the people into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Oh king, execute judgment in the morning and righteousness in the evening and deliver the spoiled from his oppressor or my fury will burn like fire because of the evil of your doings."

It was only yesterday that I heard Jeremiah make a great speech in the temple court at the close of the evening sacrifice; and from his great solemnity and

earnestness as well as from the burden of the speech itself, it was quite evident that he thought it would be his last message to the people; he spoke faithfully and bravely the message of God which he expected would rouse the people to kill him.* There was an inspiring manifestation of God's power at the close of the speech which subdued the people and saved Jeremiah from the explosion of their wrath. The speech seemed to be a summing up of all the messages he had so frequently urged upon the people as well as in line with the messages of the prophets of God in former days. He told them plainly that they frequently worshipped other gods, that even the outward acts of their worship of the true God were all in vain, that the law of God must be written upon their hearts, that each one could serve God only by trusting him and giving him sincere and hearty obedience. He urged them, "Return ye now every one from his evil way and from the evil of his doings" and he promised that they should dwell in the land in peace. But he said, "Ye have not hearkened unto the message of God but ye provoke him to anger with the work of your hands to your own hurt."

Then Jeremiah did in the court of the temple what he had frequently done in his addresses to the people in the streets of the city: he acted out in a significant way what God would do to all the workers of iniquity of whatever nation, what he would do to Babylon itself after the seventy years of our captivity were over. Oh what a long time that is, shall I never see your dear face again, my beloved? Jeremiah took a

* Jeremiah, 25th chapter.

cup of red wine in his hand and lifting it up before the eyes of the people he said, "This is the cup of the Lord's fury, of the fury of his wrath against all iniquity." He then in the most dramatic way called upon the different nations to drink of this cup saying it would make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing and a curse, it would make them drunken, they would reel to and fro and fall and rise no more on account of their iniquity.

He was so intense and vivid in his eloquence, calling up the nations our neighbors and our own nation, that we could fairly see them standing before us. He then represented the nations as refusing to drink the cup of the Lord's fury, and he urged them. He said, "Thus saith the Lord, ye shall surely drink." Now a strange thing occurred. During the latter part of the afternoon there had been gathering over the great sea and advancing on the land, a great cloud; as it drew nearer the lightning flashed and we heard the muttering of the thunder. But it advanced slowly and seemed to be passing off to the north. The great choir had chosen as the last song of the evening worship the Song of the Thunder Storm* with its seven majestic voices, closing with the word of praise and peace, "Everything in his temple saith glory, the Lord will bless his people with peace." While Jeremiah was speaking the black clouds seemed returning from the north, and as he urged the nations to drink the cup of the Lord's fury the lightning flashed and the thunder sounded fiercely. Jeremiah with his quick skill as an orator represented the thunder as the voice of God.

* Psalm 29.

"The Lord roars from on high, he utters his voice from his holy habitation, he shall mightily roar against his own nation, he shall give a shout." We could almost hear the words spoken to us: "Ye shall surely drink the cup of wrath." Jeremiah quickly brought his message to a close; turning to the princes by the King's Pillar he said, "The days of your slaughter are fully come." Then we all turned and quickly went to our homes as if pursued by the lightning and the thunder of the Lord's wrath.

I do not know when I shall be able to write to you again, my beloved, I am sending this by a trusted messenger by way of Damascus. This morning the news reached us that Nebuchadnezzar had reached and passed through Tyre with his great army; in a few days now we will see the spears flashing in the sun light on the hilltops, and the city will be besieged. May our great Lord have you in his faithful keeping, and you may trust me and your children to his loving care.

SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER VI

The Book of Jeremiah

Arrangement in the book of the speeches of Jeremiah

Part I. Josiah reigns, is conducting the reformation of the nation but it is largely superficial. About 621 B. C. Jeremiah calls for reformation of the life.

Chapter 1. Commission or call of the prophet.

Chapters 2-6. Temple Speech describes judgment and terror. In fifth chapter describes that it is not only the lowly but the great men who make their faces

harder than a rock, who refuse to return, therefore terror shall come upon all.

PART II. Jehoiakim reigns, about 605 B. C. Nebuchadnezzar has conquered Assyria and Egypt and made Judah tributary, Babylon now rules the world.

Chapters 7-10. Shiloh Speech, effect described in chapter twenty-six, see letter of the Princess Zebidah.

Chapters 11-13. Temple Speech culminating in the symbol of the linen girdle spoiled and worthless.

Chapters 14-17. Temple Speech, the cry of Jerusalem, a dramatic speech in which the people are represented crying unto the Lord and the Lord answers them.

Chapters 18-20. Street Speech, the potter's bottle, see the letter of the Princess Zebidah.

PART III. Zedekiah reigns, about 589 B. C. Jehoiakim rebelled and was killed. Jehoiachin was carried to Babylon with 10,000 captives. Zedekiah contemplates rebellion to cast off the yoke of Babylon.

Chapters 21-23. Temple Speech in presence of king and the court, counsels submission, declares the Lord will fight against them, strong denunciation of social wrongs and of the teachers of the people.

Chapter 24. Temple Speech, the cup of the Lord's fury, see letter of the Princess Zebidah.

Chapter 26. Effect of the Shiloh speech, chapters 7-10.

Chapters 27, 28. Street Speech, symbol of the yokes from former speech repeated, and the results.

Chapter 29. A letter to the captives in Babylon.

Chapters 30-33. The speeches have been largely denunciations of corruption and exhortations to submit to punishment. Jeremiah has been thrown into

prison, he now writes from the prison a letter largely of consolation to the righteous and shows his faith in God by buying a field and preserving the deed. There will be prosperity after the captivity.

Chapters 34-38. History before the destruction of Jerusalem. The heartless reformation, freeing the slaves, the siege of Jerusalem is raised; reslaving their brothers, the siege is renewed. See letter of Princess Zebidah in Chapter VII. Sketches of various speeches.

Chapters 39-44. History after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Chapters 46-52. Prophecies against heathen nations, probably extracts from speeches to the people of Judah showing God as ruling the nations righteously, to quicken their faith in him during their own sufferings, and to call for righteous living.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF TWO ORATIONS TO THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON, BY EZEKIEL

A Letter from the Captive Prince Azariah to His Wife, Princess Zebidah, in Jerusalem

My life still flows on in peace and luxury. Istaroch, the prince of the wise-men treats me more as a friend than as a captive; I have charge of his large library and he makes me his companion in his studies. He seems to be specially grateful to me as worshipping the God who through Daniel saved the lives of the wise-men as I wrote you several years ago. I wrote you also more recently of the brave stand made by the three young men, princes, companions of Daniel in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, when they refused to worship the great image of gold that the king had had set up on the plain north of the city, and how they had been delivered from the fiery furnace into which they had been cast, and how the king had frankly and publicly acknowledged the deliverance could only have been wrought by the God of the captives.

The Babylonians while brave warriors are also generous masters, they admire bravery in others and are considerate in their treatment of such captives; besides, the stupendous power of our God which they witnessed in saving their own wise-men and in saving these his own loyal worshippers, has made a great

impression upon them. There must be over a thousand of our captives in the city, some are in the palaces of the rich, many whose wives have been brought with them have homes of their own, all are engaged in useful employments, in beautifying the magnificent city, in strengthening its walls, and in business of various kinds. We would hardly know we were captives, would imagine we were voluntary colonists, only that those who have sought to get away have been turned back with some severity. We are free to pass about in the city and we even have the privilege of assembling together in social enjoyment and in the worship of our God. At one of these assemblies when I was present on a Sabbath several weeks ago, a strange message came to us, from one who had heard him speak, that there was a prophet of God among the captives settled some two hundred miles north of the city. There was at once awakened in us a great desire to hear what God had revealed to him concerning our future and the future of Jerusalem. During the next few days it was arranged that at least twenty representative men should appeal for permission to visit this prophet. I was among those chosen and I secured the influence of Daniel, the Governor of the Province, who gained from Nebuchadnezzar the permission we desired, as he is ever ready to grant reasonable favors to those who worship the God who had revealed to him in his strange dream that he would establish him as the ruler of the kingdoms of the earth.

We sailed up the Euphrates on one of the many vessels that ply upon the great river, a fair and com-

modious ship, and the voyage was pleasant. The vessel had two large sails and fifty oars, the oars were kept going during the daylight by able-bodied slaves, even when there was no favoring wind we made some progress against the heavy though sluggish current; but when, as was often the case, a strong wind blew from the south, with both oars and sails we passed many miles quite rapidly. We landed at several flourishing towns on the way, leaving some passengers and receiving others; among those joining us were several delegations of our fellow-captives from various colonies on the same mission with us to consult the prophet of God, and they told us they had heard of the wonderful visions he had and of the vivid way he used, by significant acts, to reveal the purposes of God, so our eagerness to see and hear him was greatly quickened.

On the fifth day we reached the mouth of the river Chebar, here we saw one of the vast works of King Nebuchadnezzar for the improvement of his kingdom. The river flows from the high table-land and the great mountains several hundred miles away but as it nears the Euphrates it becomes sluggish and winds about a great deal, mostly to the north, and it becomes quite wide and too shallow for such large vessels as ours to sail upon it. So Nebuchadnezzar has cut a canal some ten miles long straight from the Euphrates to the place where the Chebar is narrow and deep where large gates open for the vessels to pass into the river and close again to keep the river from rushing into the canal. At this entrance into the Chebar there is a flourishing town, largely composed of a colony

of our captives who are engaged in keeping the canal in good condition; and here our voyage ended, for among these captives was the prophet, EZEKIEL, whom we sought. We were very fortunate to reach there at about the same time as several delegations from colonies of captives further up the river so there must have been over a hundred men, elders and leaders of our people, who appealed to Ezekiel to give them a message from the Lord, our God. He responded that he would pray unto the Lord and if he had any message from him, he would speak to us at the place of assembly early the next morning.

When the morning came, many of his own colony gathered with the delegates to wait upon Ezekiel. When he came out of his house it was quite evident to us all, from his rapt gaze, that he had had a vision of the Lord; and when he spoke to us, the tones of his voice expressed the awe of his soul and forewarned us that the message he bore was one of deep distress. He described the strange vision in which God appeared to him,* a vision full of colossal figures and vast power and great mystery: whirling wheels and strange creatures upholding a vast platform and moving rapidly, upon this platform was a great throne carried along by the wheels and the creatures, and upon the throne, a man of most majestic mien; the whole vision shone with brightness of the color of amber, the man on the throne had the appearance of fire. This vision of God came to Ezekiel and put forth a hand and lifted him up and carried him, in an instant of time, to far-off Jerusalem and placed him

* Ezekiel, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters.

in the court of the temple. The vision of God now took possession of the Holy of Holies of the temple, filling it with such wonderful light that it made its walls luminous to those who gazed upon them; and from this place a voice directed Ezekiel to observe the temple in its various parts and the doings of the priests and the worshippers. Looking toward the northern court Ezekiel saw there the great image of the goddess of sensual beauty and passion and its worshippers bowing down before it; coming into the temple itself, he saw many chambers filled with the images of creeping things and abominable beasts, and the leaders of the people worshipping and burning incense to them; coming again into the court of the temple, he saw even the women of the city worshipping the image of the god of lust; looking now toward the east, he saw many men standing with their backs to the temple and stretching out their hands in worship of the sun and the queen of heaven: all these varied worshippers of idols were saying in their hearts "The Lord hath forsaken the earth, the Lord seeth us not." They had filled the land with violence and so turned to worship abominations and to turn up the nose in scorn at their righteous Lord who had forsaken the earth.

The Lord now described to Ezekiel how he would set a mark upon the foreheads of those who were his faithful followers and who mourned over the abominations prevailing in life and worship; and how, when the sentence of death and destruction was being carried out, these faithful ones would be saved alive; and how the Lord would select also from the children

of the captivity his faithful ones and "these all shall be my people and I will be their God." In the most vivid and thrilling way Ezekiel now described to us what had filled him with awe and great distress and it showed us as it had showed him that Jerusalem would be utterly destroyed and left desolate. While Ezekiel gazed upon the Holy of Holies, made luminous by the presence of the Lord in the wonderful vision of the whirling wheels and the strange creatures bearing up the great throne and the man of fire who sat upon it, this wonderful vision left the Holy of Holies and stood over its threshold and the deserted Holy of Holies became dark. A long time elapsed as Ezekiel followed the directions given him and saw the great abominations polluting the temple. Now as he looked again, the vision of the glory of God rose above the temple and slowly and reluctantly left the temple itself and stood over its eastern threshold; and the deserted temple became dark. A long time elapsed as Ezekiel heard the messages of stern justice and loving mercy, dooming the city and its wicked people to destruction and promising safety and blessing to the faithful people of the Lord. Now as Ezekiel gazed upon the wonderful vision of the glory of God, it slowly and reluctantly left the temple and even the city itself and stood over the eastern threshold or gate of the city. Ezekiel fell on his face and cried unto the Lord to spare the residue of the people in pouring out his fury upon Jerusalem. The Lord answered him "The iniquity of the people is great, the land is full of blood, the city is full of perverseness; they say the Lord seeth not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth; I will

bring their saying upon their head: I cannot endure their perverseness, I will leave them to themselves." Again Ezekiel gazed upon the wonderful vision; the strange creatures lifted up their wings, the whirling wheels passed on their way, and the glory of the Lord slowly, as if with the greatest reluctance, left the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city. But it did not tarry there long, for as he gazed, the mysterious hand reached out again and caught up Ezekiel and brought him back in an instant of time to his home among the captives in Chaldea; and then the vision itself went up from him.

This was the strange and awful message Ezekiel gave us from the Lord. The Lord has left his temple, has left his city, has left his land; and destruction, the most terrible and complete, awaits those he has deserted to their fate. Oh, my beloved, I know you and our children are safe, for I know that you have upon your foreheads and in your hearts the marks God sees of loyalty to him and so you are under his loving, protecting care. You may be assured also that the Lord will care for me in this far-off land of my captivity, for I too, with many others here, turn with loathing from the corrupting worship of false gods and with my whole heart I cleave to our righteous Lord.

The next day the various delegations returned to their homes to report to their fellow-captives the message Ezekiel had given them from the Lord. Our sail down the great river, while swift was very depressing; all the stir of the river-life, the many vessels of pleasure with music and dancing, the many great

vessels of rich merchandise and eager travellers, the many large towns and cities we passed could not draw our thoughts away from the sad message we were bearing to our fellow-captives: that our captivity must continue a long time and that our beloved city, fair Jerusalem, beautiful for situation among the mountains, and the great Temple of Solomon, the pride of our nation, the palace of our God, were doomed to awful destruction.

When we made our report to the assembly of our captives in Babylon, the great oration of Ezekiel had the same effect upon them that it had had upon us. The mysterious vision of the glory of God, the great corruption found even in the temple itself, the denunciation of impending ruin, the slow, the reluctant, the final and complete removal of God from his temple, his city and his land, leaving it to its terrible destruction, filled all souls with dismay. While many cried aloud in their agony and tore their garments in their distress, for the most part of the people their disappointment and despair were too deep for utterance. Our captivity has already stretched along for many, many years but we had thought it would soon end and we would be restored to our own land; Jerusalem still flourished, the glorious temple still existed, God would preserve them and restore us to them. But now the message from God told us they would soon be destroyed. Our hopes were all shattered, we would never see our native land again.

This morning I waited upon Daniel in his palace and told him the result of our visit to the prophet, Ezekiel; he, too, was greatly depressed by it, for it

confirmed him in his fears; he, too, had hoped against fear for the speedy restoration from captivity. Daniel then told me that news had reached them that Zedekiah had rebelled against Babylon. He said also that Nebuchadnezzar had ordered the gathering of a great army near Tyre and that he was making preparations to lead it himself, to lay siege to Jerusalem. He is very rapid and decided in carrying out his plans when once made, but I hope this letter, by my special messenger, will reach you before the beginning of the siege that the great king has decreed.

Letter from the Princess Zebidah to Her Husband, Prince Azariah, a Captive in Babylon

Oh, my beloved, shall I ever see you again? The terrible blow has fallen. The land is desolate, Jerusalem has been captured and destroyed. The temple of our God has been burned with fire. I entreated to be taken with the multitude of captives to Babylon, hoping I might meet you there but I and all my family were of the party of Jeremiah and we must share his fate. How strange it is that our loyalty to God and his prophet, and Nebuchadnezzar's favor to Jeremiah should have brought this further distress upon us! You must trust me, oh my beloved, though it is hard to explain even to myself, how I with your brave boys, should at this moment be flying into Egypt when if I could have had my way we would be coming toward you in Babylon. What will you think of me should you never receive this letter: but God will bring it to you I am sure.

The siege was long, nearly three years, for our king fought bravely and skilfully against the great army of Nebuchadnezzar. Toward the last there was great distress in the city, for food and even water became very scarce; and nearly every family was either mourning some brave soldier killed in battle or nursing a wounded member nigh unto death. During most of this time Jeremiah was in prison. Once when he was released for a few weeks, he made a great speech in the temple-court and a few days after it Nebuchadnezzar and his army raised the siege and marched away; and it seemed as if all danger was passed. Jeremiah's speech* was a rebuke to the princes and the rich people for having treated their poor brethren as slaves; he asked, how can you expect God to help you against your enemies when you are in the very act of disobeying him who commanded you to love your brother as yourself and to be especially kind to those in greatest need? It is for this one reason at least, because you are cruel and oppress your brethren in hard slavery, that God has brought this distress upon you. The plea was so strong that it reached the conscience: the next day the edict went forth that all the slaves should go free, and it was gladly obeyed, and there was much joy in the city both among the rich and the poor. That very day we noticed an unusual stir in the camps of the army surrounding the city; we expected a renewed assault and with renewed courage prepared to resist it. But to our wonder, Nebuchadnezzar and his whole army marched away to the west. We sent scouts after them who, in a

* Jeremiah 34th chapter.

few days came back with the report that, reaching the plain by the great sea, they had turned to the south and passed entirely beyond our borders. What joy filled the city! The Lord had delivered us, and our fierce and powerful enemy had vanished away. Soon vast supplies came into the city from the north and from the east and prosperity began to fill our homes and streets and our hardships and fears were quickly forgotten. Now also the princes and rich people began again to treat as slaves their poor brethren who as hired servants ministered to them in their palaces; and after a few weeks an edict was made by the king revoking the former edict and sanctioning and re-establishing slavery.

Then Jeremiah made another speech in the temple-court indignantly denouncing the renewed sin: "Ye have profaned my name, saith the Lord, ye have not hearkened unto me to proclaim liberty every man to his brother; behold, now, I proclaim unto you a liberty to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine. Behold Zedekiah and ye princes and all ye people, I will call again the king of Babylon and his army to return to this city, and they shall fight against it and take it and burn it with fire and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant." When we awoke the next morning the van of Babylon's army was seen upon the hills toward the sea and soon the great army surrounded the city again, the siege was renewed in all its vigor. We soon learned that Nebuchadnezzar had heard that Egypt was advancing to aid us, and he had met them and driven them back: so quickly our hollow-hearted repentance and our reli-

ance upon our heathen ally were proved utterly vain, as our prophet had frequently declared.

Many in their aroused anger wanted to kill Jeremiah, but his life was preserved, though he was put back into prison. From his prison he sent many messages counseling submission to Babylon. Once he was brought, by order of Zedekiah into his presence, when he exhorted the king to cease his rebellion and promised him the Lord would save his life and his throne: while if he continued the war all would be lost. From the prison he also sent many messages of great cheer to the loyal servants of God, that he would spare them, that he would eventually bring back the captivity, that Jerusalem would then be called the habitation of justice, the mountain of holiness, that God would write his law in the hearts of his people and great proseprity would prevail. He showed his own faith in this glorious future by buying a farm near the city at a great price and having the deed preserved in a stone vessel and hid in a secure place that his descendants might enjoy the farm after the troublous times were past.

So the weary, heavy days of the siege passed on, all hope of relief from Egypt failed, our own forces became weak and discouraged, famine and pestilence filled us with despair. Then came the end; the walls were broken down and the fierce soldiers entered the city. Zedekiah and his army fled but were captured and brought back and treated with great cruelty. We were in the hands of our foes who were enraged at our stubborn resistance, and they visited their vengeance in the destruction of the city. The temple

of our God was despoiled of all its treasures and was burned with fire.

But Jeremiah and those who were of his party were treated with much favor. Nebuchadnezzar believed our God had made him king of the whole earth according to the dream Daniel had revealed to him, as you wrote me a few years ago; and he had heard that Jeremiah was the prophet of God who had counseled submission to Babylon. So he selected from the party of Jeremiah my father's brother, Gedaliah, and made him the governor of the land. He offered Jeremiah and his friends freedom under the rule of Babylon and that they could choose where they would live, here or anywhere in the kingdom or even in Babylon itself. Then I plead with my uncle, the governor and with Jeremiah that I, at least, with your boys, might go with the captives, but in vain; Jeremiah decided to remain in Judah and was unwilling to risk our welfare in the long journey with the depressed captives and their cruel and enraged captors. So we remained at Mizpah, and my heart failed me as I saw the long line of captives and their fierce masters set out on their weary and dangerous journey to Babylon.

For a while all went well at Mizpah. Then certain princes who had lived, during the war, in Ammon and Moab and who had been welcomed upon their return by Gedaliah, the Governor, slew him thinking to rule in his place. They were soon overthrown and driven back to Ammon. But now most of our leaders were seized with fear that Babylon would count them responsible for the murder of the governor and for the disorder, and in their panic they made ready to fly

into Egypt. They consulted Jeremiah who strongly advised against it, but in vain. So we are now on our flight into Egypt and Jeremiah is with us. Oh, my beloved, would that I could have gone with the captives to Babylon, I might have reached that city, I might have met you, at any rate been in the same city with you. What will befall us in Egypt who can tell? Jeremiah is with us and he is the prophet of our God. He says Nebuchadnezzar will attack and conquer Egypt; perhaps when he raises his army he may bring you with him, then we may be united again in Egypt. But whether we ever meet again or no, we are both under the care of the God whom we adore. He knows his name is on our foreheads as Ezekiel says and he will preserve us as he has done so far through all these troubles.

Letter from the Captive, Prince Azariah, to His Wife, the Princess Zebidah, a Fugitive in Egypt

My heart has been filled with the greatest anxiety for you, oh my beloved, day and night since we heard of the destruction of Jerusalem. But I am not in despair for I rely upon the promise given us from God by Ezekiel that he would place his name upon the foreheads of his devoted followers and would save them when Jerusalem should be destroyed, and I know you and the boys are loyal to God. You can only faintly imagine the despair that fell upon the captives in Babylon when the messenger from the king published through the city that Jerusalem had not only been captured but entirely destroyed and

that Solomon's Temple had been burned to the ground. Many of us have been captives for over eleven long weary years; during all these years we have known that Jerusalem still existed and that the temple-worship of our great God was being observed; God, too, had revealed his presence and power here, both to the Babylonians and to us, in marvelous ways through Daniel and his companions. It was natural for us to hope that God would soon bring us back to our homeland and that then our hard exile would be only a hideous memory.

True, Ezekiel's great oration, of which I wrote you, warned us that God had left our city and land to its destruction, but we could hardly believe it possible. We knew that Nebuchadnezzar was again besieging the city, but we had learned to admire him for his vast ability, his great statesmanship and his sense of righteousness. Had not our God greatly favored him? Had he not frankly acknowledged our God's existence? And we thought he would probably capture the city and restore his government over it but we never dreamed he would utterly destroy it.

In a few months after this news, the first detachment of the victorious army returned to Babylon and brought many captives. What was my surprise to discover my brother Shealtiel among these captives. I soon learned to what part of the city he had been assigned and, as I was free to go wherever I chose, I soon visited him; and through Daniel I have secured him a better situation. He told me of the great hardships he had endured in the long march and that many captives had fallen by the way. He told me also

that your uncle Gedaliah had been made governor of Judea and that you and the boys were with him at Mizpah, so my anxiety for you has been greatly relieved.

Recently our hopes have been revived by another message from God by his prophet Ezekiel and I hasten to write to you that you and the people with you may take new courage and be of good cheer in your desolate land. Our captives here in Babylon soon thought, in the depths of their despair, of sending another delegation to consult Ezekiel, perhaps God would give us some direction of present duty through him; I was a member of this delegation as of the first; and again I succeeded, through the influence of Daniel, in gaining permission for the long journey. Again we sailed up the great river Euphrates and through the great canal of Nebuchadnezzar to Chebar, this time with heavier hearts than on our first voyage but with stronger faith in the prophet, for had he not then foretold to us the great disaster which had now cast its heavy burden of despair upon us?

We found that Ezekiel had become a great man in Chebar during the past three years, he was the chief man in the care of the canal and in the development of the low lands through which the river wound to pour its waters into the Euphrates, and his skill had now won him honor and wealth. Upon his appointment we, and the delegates from other colonies of captives, and many of his neighbors, gathered at his residence in the early morning. There were nearly five hundred men seated on the grass when Ezekiel came out of his door, we rose to receive him and he,

standing on his porch, gave us the message God had given him. There was the rapture of joy in his eyes and upon his face which awakened hope in us before he spoke, and then his rich and far-carrying voice thrilled us with its tone of triumph, his action too was vigorous and enthusiastic: it did not seem like a captive addressing a band of captives, rather like a victorious general proclaiming his purpose of conquest to his brave army. His great oration* conveyed his hopes and feelings, his wonderful faith and purpose to our souls and has become a part of our nature, written on our memory and treasured in our hearts.

God's glory still appeared to Ezekiel in the mysterious vision of whirling wheels and strange creatures carrying a flaming platform and a glowing throne upon which was seated a man of flashing fire.

God had so manifested his presence in his land that there had been a great shaking in the land: the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things, and all the men on the face of the earth had been shaken by his presence; the mountains and the steep places had been thrown down and every wall had fallen to the ground before the glorious presence of the righteous God judging the people. So he pictured to us how God had shaken out of his land not only his own faithless and disobedient people but their enemies as well, whom he had brought in to be his chastising rod and who, having accomplished his purpose, had now themselves been shaken out of the land. But Ezekiel spoke not only of judgment but, with a great note of triumph

* Ezekiel, chapters 36–43.

in his voice, he described God as speaking from his glory to the mountains of Israel. "Ye have borne shame but now, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they are at hand to come. I will turn unto you and ye shall be tilled and sown. I will multiply men upon you even the house of Israel, the cities shall be inhabited, the waste places shall be builded; and they shall say: this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fenced and inhabited; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have builded the ruined places. I, the Lord, have spoken it and I will do it."

If this had been the whole of Ezekiel's great oration it would have thrilled us with hope for some far, future day and, perhaps, for our own children but would have given us, poor captives, little hope for ourselves, for we were hopelessly in the power of our conquerors. But in one part of his speech Ezekiel described our condition as one of despair to us but not of despair to our all-powerful God. The mysterious vision, the glorious power of God, put forth a hand and placed Ezekiel in a great valley, and behold, it was full of very dry bones. Then God spake through Ezekiel "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord and live," and there was a noise like an earthquake and the bones came together, bone to his bone, and there were sinews upon them and flesh and skin, but there was no breath in them. Then God spake through Ezekiel "Come from the four winds, O breath and breathe upon these slain that they may live" and

the breath came into them and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. So, said Ezekiel, God will bring you out of your captivity and will bring you into the land of Israel: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord."

But even this glowing promise was not the best of Ezekiel's message from God, there was the promise of loyal character of the restored people and of a noble king to rule over and care for them. God said of the people "I will cleanse you from all your iniquity and from your idols, a new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and keep my judgments. Ye shall be my people and I will be your God." He spoke also of the new king. God had said that the kings who had ruled had not been true shepherds of the people, had not watched over them and guarded them, had not had their interests at heart, but had sought their own ease and pleasure. But now God said he would set one to be a real shepherd over them "even my servant David, a prince among them, he shall feed them, my servant David shall be a king over them, he shall be their prince forever, and I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them; I, the Lord, have spoken it: I will do it. And all the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel, for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel." He closed his great oration by describing his vision of the glory of the Lord returning to his land and city and by the north gate into a new Temple, and it filled the house of the Lord.

When Ezekiel ceased speaking we all with one accord fell upon our knees and prostrated ourselves before God and worshipped him who had spoken to us such glorious promises through his prophet.

Our return voyage was far different in spirit from the first: then we had gone to the prophet with great hope and had returned in heavy spirits, this time we had gone to him in deep despair but we returned in a joyous spirit. As we passed the vessels of pleasure upon the river, with their songs and dancing, we were singing our songs of praise. As we passed the fair cities and the prosperous country, we could admire it all while we thought of our fairer land, a land of mountains and hills, fruitful, beautiful, prosperous, as God had promised us.

When we reached Babylon our report of Ezekiel's message gave great joy to our people. But also there had come, during our absence, news that filled our hearts with dismay and gave to me renewed anxiety concerning you, my beloved. We heard that the new governor, your uncle Gedaliah, had been killed in Mizpah and that the princes of his court, and Jeremiah with them, had fled into Egypt. I suppose you and the boys are with them in a wild flight to the land of our former slavery. I have just heard, through Daniel, that Nebuchadnezzar has resolved to raise a large army and march to the conquest of Egypt; he also says that Istaroch, the wise-man, has been ordered to accompany Nebuchadnezzar into Egypt. Of course he will take me with him and so, my beloved, we may meet again. Should we meet, even in Egypt, I am sure we will never be separated again.

SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER VII

Book of Ezekiel

Arrangement in the book of the speeches of Ezekiel

Part I. Before the destruction of the Temple, about 595 B. C. Ezekiel was taken to Babylon with the 10,000 captives and King Jehoiachin. While King Zedekiah reigned in Jerusalem and the Temple stood the captives in Babylon hoped to return. The speeches of Ezekiel were all made in Babylon to delegations sent to ask him about this return.

Chapters 1-3. The call of the prophet. The great vision of the glory of God gives him his commission. From this his reputation spreads to the various colonies of captives.

Chapters 4-7. The destruction of Jerusalem described by symbolical acts.

Chapters 8-13. The vision of the glory of God leaving the Temple and the land. See the letter of Prince Azariah.

Chapters 14-20. Great sinfulness described and enforced by parables of the vine, the harlot, the eagle, and the lioness and her whelps.

Chapters 20-23. The time of the destruction of Jerusalem is near, the corruption is great, demanding it; the parable of the two harlots illustrates it.

Chapter 24. The destruction of the Temple and the city is at hand. The parable of the caldron. The prophet under great affliction restrains his feelings, a symbolic example to the people. There is a year of silence between each speech and now for several years Ezekiel is dumb, has no message.

PART II. Chapters 25-33. Prophecies against heathen nations who had rejoiced in the distress of Jerusalem, extracts from former speeches. To be specially noted, the description of Tyre as a ship, 27th chapter, and of Egypt as a dragon of the river, 29th chapter.

PART III. Chapters 3-35. News of the destruction of the Temple unseals the lips of Ezekiel. The blessings upon repentance. The Lord, the shepherd of his people, to rescue the righteous.

Chapters 36-43. The land blessed, the people restored, the vision of the Lord returning to his land and the Temple, see letter of Prince Azariah.

Chapters 44-46. The worship of the restored people in the land.

Chapter 47. The blessings flowing from the Temple over the land as a river.

Chapter 48. The full restoration, the Lord is there.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY OF TWO ORATIONS, BY HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH, DURING THE REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM

A Letter from a Prince of Benjamin to His Sister Remaining in Babylon

No one can find the least fault with you for staying with your husband and your young children. We remember the nobility of Prince Istaroch, the wise-man of the Chaldeans, who fell in love with you and made you his wife over ten years ago. His father had been kind to the captive, Prince Azariah, and made him his companion in his studies; and had given honor to our great God who had saved the lives of the wise-men by revealing to Daniel the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. We know your husband too, honors our God and counseled King Cyrus to issue the decree for the return of the captives and the rebuilding of Jerusalem; but we could not expect him to cast in his lot with us; nor could we expect you to leave him you so deeply love and your children who must have remained with him in his palace. Still we know your thoughts often follow us in our strange experience.

I saw you watching us and waving farewell to us as we marched through the streets of Babylon toward the northern gate. Ours was a vast array of perhaps

thirty thousand men and women, we had many horses and camels and rich belongings. We were in high spirits, praising God with trumpets and songs; and many cheers followed us from the friendly citizens of the great capital. Was it not wonderful, to us and to them, that Cyrus should have decreed the return of the captives? The hand of the great God who had in many ways shown his presence and power in Babylon was evidently leading us. But there was also a heavy heart in many a marching captive, for we were leaving our birthplace and life-long home-city, and were breaking many strong ties of family and friendship and some of us were leaving great prosperity which we had gained and which promised to increase.

As we marched in easy stages on the wellmade roads along the beautiful and fruitful banks of the river Euphrates we were joined by large numbers of captives from the various flourishing towns and cities who in their loyalty to our God cast in their lot with us: so for many days the triumphant nature of our journey and the spirit of successful adventure cheered our spirits. Then followed weary weeks of many hardships and dangers which greatly depressed us. We turned to the west and soon entered a more rugged country becoming at length mountainous; it was also less fruitful, and sometimes, for long marches, it was difficult to get sufficient sustenance; and especially the populace was less friendly and frequently became hostile. Sometimes we halted for days while our leaders, with great difficulty persuaded those in power to grant us permission to pass through their borders. The empire of Cyrus covered all our journey but some

fierce tribes we passed on the way were restive under his sway, and even when their leaders permitted us to pass, the people hung upon our skirts with frowns and curses and often with swift and fierce assaults. So with danger and hardship the weary weeks passed by and our march was slow, we were only protected by the reluctant obedience given to a heathen king. We could not help contrasting our experience with that of our fore-fathers when God brought them out of Egypt; then there was the terror of their masters awakened by the plagues and at length by the overthrow of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea; then God revealed his presence and glory at Mount Sinai, and he guided them through all their journey by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, and provided for all their needs and defended them from all their foes. But with us there was no sign of God's presence, the heavens above us were clear and silent; we had to find our own way through a strange land and we were defended from fierce foes only by the decree of a heathen king. Were we indeed under the care of our God and were we doing his will? We believed it, but we could not see any sign of his presence and favor, save only that we were on our journey to our homeland by the decree of Cyrus, that wonderful decree which we could account for only by the wisdom and power and favor of our God.

When at length we reached our homeland its charm of beauty thrilled us: its grand mountains and hills, its graceful streams and plains, its wide views of the great sea were as our fathers had described them to us; but its great fruitfulness had been swept away by

the grasping, greedy colonists during the seventy years of their possession; and these colonists themselves treated us as intruders upon what they regarded as their land. When at last we reached Jerusalem our spirits were almost crushed into despair. Was it for this we had left our relatives and friends in Babylon, and our prosperity there? Was it for this that we had pressed our way through the untold hardships and dangerous foes of our long march? Jerusalem was still in ruins. The few of our nation who had remained when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city, regarded it as forsaken of God and had scattered into nearby or quite distant villages and towns.

The colonists from Babylon had regarded the city of our God as cursed by their triumphant gods, and as Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed it, they in loyalty to him and to their gods, left it to its deserved desolation. We had reached the end of our journey and of our self-denial in loyalty to our God: but where was our God? No voice came from the clear skies. There was no sign of his presence on the mountain-tops. And this wide ruin, these broken walls, these destroyed palaces, this burned temple seemed to say: He is not here, he has forsaken the place.

But we were here with our camels and horses and large possessions, and we were here by the command of Cyrus and through him, of our God; and we were to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple; and, too wonderful to realize, we were a vast number of people, nearly fifty thousand men and women, less than a year ago we were captives in far-off Babylon, now we were in the land of our fathers where they had lived and wor-

shipped our God through many prosperous generations. So we soon began to recover our faith and our courage; though we could not see our God we would obey him; we would rebuild the city and the temple. Then we found that our hardships were only begun. We could build only the rudest houses at first, mere huts for shelter during the cold, rainy seasons; and we could secure only the barest sustenance from our greedy neighbors. So many weary months passed by. We rebuilt the walls of the city marking its former boundaries, though we were small in numbers where multitudes had formerly lived; we marked out, as far as we needed, the old streets where palaces had stood and began building better houses for our use; we cleared off the mountain of the Lord's Temple of its desecrated ruins and there we reestablished the worship of Jehovah. Our assemblies of the people on this mount of worship were often joyous and we sang aloud the praises of Jehovah; sometimes we were depressed and we then cultured our faith by recounting how he had led our fore-fathers and how he had freed us from our captivity in Babylon; and we sought help from him in carrying on the great work he had given us to do.

Thus several years passed by and still we hesitated to build the Temple of the Lord. We were not prosperous enough to begin such a great work; the harvests were poor, the land having been so long abused by the grasping colonists, and of course Jerusalem itself was poor, much of the wealth we had brought with us had already been used to build our dwelling-houses; and the temple, when builded, should be splen-

did like Solomon's and worthy of the great Jehovah; surely we were not able yet to undertake such a building. Besides, the Babylonian colonists were hostile to our building the city and the temple; they discouraged us in every way and tried to dissuade and hinder us and they sent word to the king who succeeded Cyrus who responded with a decree forbidding the further building of what they called "the rebellious city." But soon another king, finding the decree of Cyrus, issued a decree that the city and the temple, too, should be rebuilded.

Then a strange thing occurred. There was a great assembly of the people worshipping Jehovah on the temple-hill before the altar we had erected there, the smoke of the evening sacrifice was rising in the air and the song of praise was just ending when a very old man pressed forward and began to speak to us.* Though his age was apparent, his long hair and long beard as white as the snow of Mount Hermon, still he was a straight and sturdy man and his voice had its thunder tones as if God was speaking through him. We were greatly impressed by him for it seemed to us that the spirit of the old prophets, who had appealed to our fathers so often and had brought to them messages from God, was with us now and had a message for us. His was a short oration but it was a very earnest one. "Carefully consider your ways" he urged us. "Look upon them as God looks upon them; ye have builded yourselves houses and ye dwell in them, but ye have not builded a house for God to dwell with you, his house lieth waste. Ye have indeed sown

* Haggai, the whole book.

much and have brought in very little, ye eat but ye have not enough. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that lieth waste while ye run every man to his own house. Now consider your ways saith the Lord: go up to the mountain and bring wood and build my house and I will take pleasure in it and will dwell with you and bless you."

His speech greatly influenced us; it was indeed a call from God himself to us and we at once resolved that we would build the temple; and while we were encouraging each other he vanished away. Many were the inquiries, as we went down from the hill to our houses, as to who he was and where he lived; but no one could tell.

There followed busy weeks of great enthusiasm; the bounds of the temple were marked out, the foundations were laid, much material of wood and stone was gathered from the mountains; but at length our hearts began to fail us. There were many among us who had heard from our fathers of the grandeur of Solomon's Temple and there were a few old men among us who had seen that building, one of the wonders of the world, with its wide colonnades of marble, its roof of gold flashing in the sunlight. They all told us and we all felt that, do the best we could, our temple would hardly be a rebuilding, it would be base and mean compared with the former glory. Then one evening, after a discouraging day's work when our hearts were cast down within us and our evening worship itself had been greatly depressed, the old prophet stood again before us.

There was inspiration in his face, there was the

ringing tone of triumph in his voice as he brought another message to us from our great Jehovah. He spoke as if he knew our inmost thoughts. "Ye that saw this house in its former glory, how do ye see it now? It is in your eyes as nothing. But not so in the eyes of your God. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: be strong, oh governor; be strong, oh priest; be strong to build this house, oh people. For the desirable of all nations shall come to this house. I will fill this house with my glory, the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former. In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."

And again the old prophet vanished away. No one knew who he was, whence he came, or whither he went: but the message he gave us thrilled us with new courage. We did not know how it could ever be: the glory of this house greater than that of Solomon's Temple; the desirable of all nations to come here; peace, soundness, completeness to center here; the glory of God to dwell here. Well might we work to take part in such farreaching plans of our great Jehovah.

Once again the old prophet spoke to the people building the temple. Once again his great oration carried us far beyond our day and our vision and gave us a glimpse of Jehovah's wide plans. We could hardly believe that our poor work and faltering hearts should be of service to him in his gracious purposes for the whole earth, but so the prophet assured us. "Ye have indeed been faulty, even unclean in my sight, and I have seen your work for yourselves as unclean; but now ye have turned and ye are building

my house and working with me, and from this day I will bless you. And you, the governor of my people and their leader in their work, the little ruler of a small people, be not cast down; thus saith the Lord of hosts, I will shake the heavens and the earth, I will overthrow the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, but I will take thee, my servant and will make thee as a signet, the sign of my wide-spread and everlasting rule, for I have chosen thee."

Again the old prophet vanished from our sight, and we never saw him again. We have since discovered that he was of the few great men, the true servants of God who remained in this land when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and carried the last captives to Babylon. His name was HAGGAI and he had lived, with a few friends on the mountain east of Jerusalem, a life of meditation and of waiting for the promised restoration; and that these three times he had felt impelled to bear his message from God to his discouraged people. Upon his return from the last mission he had died and had been buried with honor and affection worthy of such a choice spirit.

Then the entirely unexpected happened. There was a young man among our leaders, very hopeful and courageous, who was constantly growing in influence over us; an obstacle only invited him to overcome it, and he carried along many followers by his contagious good cheer. He met the opposition of our foes with a mingled tact and determination that frequently silenced them. He seemed to have but one idea which swayed him and through him swayed a multitude: that our God, who had commanded the building of the

temple, would certainly crown his obedient followers with complete success, no matter how difficult the task or who opposed them. Many thought he was a young enthusiast who lacked judgment and that we should be very cautious how we followed him lest he should awaken our foes to fierce and overwhelming opposition, lest we undertake a greater work than we had power to complete. Others thought, especially the younger among us, that his was the only reasonable spirit in carrying out the commandment of our God.

But while we differed in our views of this young man and his enthusisastic leadership, not a single one of us ever dreamed of his being a prophet of God, nor had he ever claimed such an office. Then at the close of the evening sacrifice, ZECHARIAH made a great oration to the assembled people, claiming that God had given him a message for us.* No one of us will ever forget that speech. In a most rapt way he described to us a series of strange visions God had given him and as he described them he seemed to see them again; and he made us see them as he saw them; and the awe he felt thrilled our souls as well. In each case he asked an angel who stood by him, the meaning of the vision; and as he told us the answer given him, it seemed as if God spoke to us through him. It seemed, as Zechariah spoke, that God was present though our eyes could not see him; and that he was showing us the kingdoms of the earth and the forces dominant in them, that we might courageously fill our part in God's great plan. Zechariah, this young prophet, as he described each vision, said: "I lifted up mine eyes and

* Zechariah, the whole book.

saw": what he saw God made him see; then in each case he said: "Oh my Lord, what are these?" And the angel described the meaning of the vision: the prophet was only the seer of the sights God made to pass before him, and the speaker of the message God gave to him. The visions, while far different from each other, seemed closely related in their meaning; and, as he described them and explained them, we were carried on to ever higher heights of courage and enthusiasm to build the temple.

The first vision was of a man riding a horse and leading many other horses. And the angel said, "These are the Lord's messengers through the earth, hear the report they make, 'We have walked peacefully through the earth and behold the earth sitteth still and is at rest.' Then the Lord said, 'This is the peaceful time, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies, my house shall be built in it for me to dwell there.' "

The second vision was of horns and smiths breaking them. And the angel said, "Though the horns of all earthly powers may oppose, the smiths of the Lord will break them."

The third vision was of a man measuring the bounds of the city. And the angel said, "Multitudes shall dwell in the city and be secure for the Lord himself will be unto her a wall of fire round about her and a glory in the midst of her: sing and rejoice, oh daughter of Zion, for lo! I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee saith the Lord."

The fourth vision was of Joshua, our high priest, clad in poor garments and Satan opposing him. And

the angel said, "The Lord rebuke thee, oh Satan; take the poor garments from the high priest and clothe him with rich apparel, and set a fair mitre upon his head; for the Lord hath caused the iniquity of the people to pass away and hath clothed them with the spirit of walking in his ways, so their priest shall have access to me."

The fifth vision was of a golden candle-stick in the temple, fed by the oil from wonderful living olive trees. And the angel said, "O Zerubbabel, thou governor of my people, thy work is not by thy might, nor by thy power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Thy hands have laid the foundations of my temple, thy hands shall finish it. Who art thou, oh great mountain that opposes him! Thou shalt become a plain; he shall bring forth the head-stone of my house with shoutings of grace unto it."

Then followed strange visions of an immense flying roll, and of a woman sitting in a large measure which was carried by women with wings, and of four chariots with horses coming out from between two mountains of brass and driving like the wind in all directions; and the angel explained that the Lord would remove wickedness out of his land and would subdue all lands under his righteous dominion.

Zechariah closed his great oration by telling us that Jehovah had commanded him to make a crown of silver and gold, very rich, and place it upon the head of Joshua, our high priest, and this crown was to be treasured in the temple of the Lord. Connected with this priestly crown there was a mysterious promise which we could not fully understand but which

brought to our memory the statement of Haggai: that the glory of this temple would be greater than that of Solomon. "The Lord will raise up a man whose name is the Branch, he shall grow and shall build the temple and shall bear the glory and shall be a priest, sitting and ruling upon his throne, and they that are afar off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord."

It has been several months since the death of the old prophet, Haggai, and since the outburst of prophecy in the enthusiastic young man, Zechariah, and the work of building the temple is going on with much zeal. We feel that we have been wonderfully restored from the long captivity in Babylon, and though we have many hardships and much opposition and great difficulty, yet we are obeying the commands of our great Jehovah and he is with us and is blessing us.

Our temple, at its best, will not be as splendid in outward appearance as that where our fathers worshipped, the temple Solomon builded; but the prophets have given us the vision of God's plans, and the temple we build will have the greater inward glory, it will be the throne-room where the Branch that God will raise up, the King-priest, crowned by God's command, will sit and rule all the nations in righteousness.

So the temple nears completion as we work with the great courage that the prophets have inspired.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY OF TWO ORATIONS BY JESUS OF NAZARETH

A Letter from One Traveling in the Eastern Provinces to His Father, a Patrician at Rome

After visiting Ephesus, Antioch and Damascus, I reached this land some three months ago and I have become so much interested in these people that I plan to remain among them for a long time. At first I lived in Capernaum, a flourishing city on the Sea of Tiberias and there I have my apartments now; I have secured them from a wealthy Greek merchant whose marble palace is reflected in the clear waters of the lake, and there my servants are staying: it is a home befitting the rank of your son.

But the city itself is every much like the other cities I have visited, it is on the caravan route from the great sea to Damascus; and the Sea of Tiberias, while small, has many cities upon its shores and much commerce is carried on; so the city is one of merchants and traders, and the streets are full of the rush of business, and men of many nations meet in its markets: it is a place of great wealth and large influence and here, of course, the power of our great empire is dominant.

But now for a month or more I have been living among the people of the land in the towns and villages off the great caravan route and between the Sea of Tiberias and the great sea. I am trying to realize your design in sending me to other lands, that I may learn self-control and so learn to control others, that I may know how to rule strange people should I ever become the governor of a province, that I may be your worthy successor in the senate should that time ever come, and that I may know how to manage our vast estates. I am alone among the people, my servants I have ordered to remain in Capernaum, but I am being well-treated and I am welcomed wherever I go, treated as one of their number. You may think this very strange when I tell you what kind of people they are, that I, a Roman nobleman, should be willing to live with them as an equal, and that they, though very hospitable, should be willing to receive one of their conquerors as a friend. The first is a long story which this letter will explain; the second, their high regard for me, is due to a little adventure I had when I first went out among them. These people have a very high regard for the virtue of their women, as you have taught me to have; their mothers are venerated, husbands and wives are true to each other, divorce is almost unknown among them, and the chastity of their maidens is sacred. One day as I was walking along the high wall of an olive grove I heard an agonized cry for help. I sprang over the wall and, running into the thick grove, I found a Roman centurion trying to violate a Jewish maiden and she was in desperate resistance. Drawing my sword, I sprang

to her assistance; I found the centurion a brave warrior and it was only after a fierce battle that I succeeded in disabling him; then I made myself known to him and denounced his dastardly attempt. But another had heard the maiden's cry for help, and her betrothed lover, a sturdy peasant, came with fury, to save her; with a great club he would have killed the disabled centurion had I not defended him; so I won the respect of the centurion by saving his life and the deep gratitude of the lovers, I saved them to each other, for had he killed the centurion his own life would have been forfeited. Not only did the town where they lived and where they were soon married, welcome me as their friend but many other nearby towns heard of my risking my life to save the girl from a Roman centurion and welcomed me as their friend; I became a hero in their esteem, their own hero, and they treated me and are treating me without reserve as their friend.

The remainder of this letter will explain to you how I, who have always lived in a palace and associated only with the noble, should be interested in these people whom we must call peasants, and why I should be a guest in their common abodes.

The land is very beautiful, valleys and plains with quite high hills and to the north high mountains, give it a varied charm; the views are delightful of the rolling hills and lofty mountains, the great sea toward the sunset and the little sea toward the east with the lofty table-lands beyond. On the hillsides and in the valleys there are many towns and villages, their white buildings, made of the native rock, flashing in the

sunlight. The life in these towns seems like that of a large family, there are no classes among the people such as we are familiar with rich and poor, patrons and clients, masters and slaves, land-owners and land-laborers; but all are equal in rights and privileges and live as neighbors and friends. Each town and village is self-supporting, there is friendly intercourse with others but only that of fellowship, not of dependence. The people are themselves of a wonderfully independent, self-respecting, self-supporting spirit. All the land in this section of the country, and I understand it is largely so in the southern province, is divided up into small farms and each farm is held by a family in successive generations and so becomes very dear to the family. The families live together in the fellowship of the villages and towns; each family has its own house and, on the outskirts of the town on all sides, each family has its own small farm. These farms are generally narrow strips of land reaching and touching, at the farther end, the farms of the next village: so there are a multitude of such villages covering the hillsides and nestling in the valleys. Each family sends its members out in the morning to cultivate the land; the families are generally large so the workers are many, and there is a friendly rivalry in making each farm a garden spot; the valleys are covered with grain, the hills are terraced with olive groves and vineyards, so the land, naturally fertile, and cultivated in this way, becomes very productive and, were it not for the heavy taxes of our empire and of the people's religion, plenty would abound and prosperity be more evenly distributed.

So you see if I am to live with these people at all I cannot live in a palace, the center of a large estate as in my homeland, for there is no such large estate owned by the people of the land and only here and there one that some noble Roman or Greek has, by various means of oppression, secured for himself. In our land, many such villages would themselves be owned by some wealthy nobleman whose palace would dominate the country-side, and the people of the villages would be his dependents, and you would not want your son to live or associate in any way with such inferiors. But here I am living with the land-owners themselves and they are a most self-respecting and independent people; I have learned, proud Roman as I am, to hold them in high regard; and they regard me as their friend; and, do not laugh at me or in scorn of them, they really treat me as their equal.

Their hospitality is boundless. When the workers return from the fields at eventide and the evening meal is over, social life reigns delightfully; there are gatherings for amusement and, would you believe it, there are gatherings for culture and for the discussion of interesting questions of politics and religion; and to all I am heartily welcomed. One day in every seven these people cease all work on farm or in village, dress themselves in their festal robes and, men and women mingling together as equals, they assemble in a large central building that they call a synagogue and they sing the songs of their religion and make prayers to their God, though there is no image of him or any other sign of his presence, and one of them reads from their sacred books and speaks upon what

he has read; others as they may desire are free to speak also, and frequently there is a very earnest discussion as to how they shall conduct themselves toward their God and toward each other in their daily life and, also, toward the Roman government.

There is a school for the young, connected with each synagogue, where all the children of the village are taught, which accounts, in a measure, for the general intelligence of the people; and this is still further promoted by the general discussion of important questions of life on the rest days and on other days also; and still further by the general independence of the people in owning the land and in planning for and taking care of themselves: the responsibility of self-support quickens their intelligence and independence. There is no one to plan for them or to direct them in their work, no one to act in any large way as a father or patron of them to support them or to defend them, and so they must as equals take care of themselves; and this develops the true manliness and womanliness which have now my highest admiration. You can hardly believe I know, for I could not if I had not lived among them, that all the people of the land deserve the name of noblemen; we are so used to taking care of our dependents on our vast estates and to rule the many slaves in our palaces that we can think only of ourselves as noblemen and of all other people as far beneath us, even as belonging to an inferior race; but there are no inferiors here, all are independent, equal, and live in these towns and villages as members of one large family.

For the past few weeks I have been living, a guest

of several families, in the village of Nazareth; it is the home of several thousand of these independent people, most of them owners and farmers of the surrounding land and such merchants and artizans as are needed to make the common life flow easily and smoothly. It is beautifully situated on a high hillside looking off to the great sea and the wide, charming views of hill and valley and sea are inspiring to every lover of nature and the air is as clear and warm and the skies are as blue as in my beloved homeland. I have here learned of a remarkable man, a native of this town who carried on the trade of a carpenter up to about a year ago, but who now has become a great teacher having a large and spreading influence among the people of the whole land, he is still a young man about thirty years of age and is called Jesus of Nazareth. He teaches about, what he calls, the Kingdom of God which he is to establish. A few weeks before I came here he came back to Nazareth for a few days; he had won the admiration and regard of all by his life among them as a carpenter for he had been a fine and faithful workman in all departments of his trade; and the people were very proud of the fame as a teacher he had attained as far south as the capital city, Jerusalem; so his welcome by his former friends and neighbors was hearty. But there came a sudden revulsion of feeling when on the rest day he spoke to the assembled multitude in their synagogue, and they turned him out of their town, threatening to kill him. I find it difficult to understand why this quick change of feeling occurred. It seems he gave a most glowing account of the kingdom of God, and they were aston-

ished at his learning and eloquence; and when they questioned him further about this kingdom, he intimated to them in his vivid way that he would extend it to all nations besides their own, that it would take in, on equal terms, even their former and present oppressors, the Greeks and the Romans; then they rose against him in flaming wrath. He is now making his home in Capernaum from which place he goes about teaching in various towns, and recently I found an opportunity to hear him for I was very anxious to learn about the strange kingdom he is proclaiming. Besides there are many stories told of this Jesus: that he works signs or wonders, as they are called, deeds that show that he has more than human power, and he always works these to bless the needy, and from the goodness of his heart.

Do you remember the patrician, our nearest neighbor, who left Rome several years ago because it was thought his invalid son would be benefited by living in the far east? I met him in Capernaum, he has a fine palace on the outskirts of the town, and when I visited him there I asked him about his son. He at once called him and he is now the very picture of youthful, vigorous health. I expressed my gratified surprise that the climate had done so much for him. "Oh, it was not the climate," he said, "he became weaker and weaker and at length was at the point of death. Then in my despair I sought out Jesus of Nazareth, he was teaching some twenty miles off, I thrust my way through the crowd and interrupted him with my agonized cry: 'Sir, come down ere my child die!' He looked upon me with mingled majesty and

compassion and said in utmost simplicity, 'Go thy way, thy son liveth'; it seemed impossible, but I believed him; and bowing down low to him, I hastened on my return. When I reached home the next day I found my son well and strong and he told me that the fever left him at the very hour the day before that Jesus had said 'Thy son liveth.' Now I believe in Jesus and in his kingdom and so do all my family." So I became still more anxious to hear this wonderful teacher speak about his new kingdom.

A few evenings ago it was rumored through the town that Jesus of Nazareth was a few miles off toward the Sea of Tiberias; several members of the family, whose guest I was, had great admiration for him and proposed an early trip the next morning to hear him; many others entered into the plan and I was very glad to go with them. The stars were still shining when we started and we were quickly joined on our way by many others from other towns. When we came near the village where Jesus had spent the night we found the whole country-side had poured out, from all directions, a multitude of men and women eager to hear him. Some of his attendants, by his direction, arranged that we should gather on a certain hillside and that Jesus would then come and speak to us. It was a strikingly beautiful scene: the hill sloped gently down to a broad plain which reached to the little sea only a few miles distant; the multitude sat down on the grass, the day was clear as a bell, the air delightful with the breath of the springtime. There was eager excitement quickly spreading through the crowd when it became known that Jesus had recently

worked many wonders of healing and that he had just chosen twelve men to carry on his work and had conferred like power upon them.

As I looked over the multitude most of them were evidently from the surrounding towns but there were also many who, by their dress, showed they were from distant cities and from other lands. There was a hush of all the excited talk, and a great silence when a tall and powerfully built man, in the ordinary garb of the country people, passed with great dignity of bearing, among us and, reaching a vantage-point, turned and began speaking to us. Then for the first time I saw Jesus of Nazareth, a man I will never forget.

His face was like that of a god, like Apollo, full of a commanding majesty and mingled with it, a deep compassion for mankind. His voice, how shall I describe it? It had much of Jove-like power that spoke only to be obeyed, and with it was an infinite tenderness like that of some noble mother counseling her sons to lofty lives. And the speech he made to us, how I wish I could fully describe it to you; I had meant to take notes and had brought my tablets with me, but I was so impressed by the man and his great oration that I forgot the tablets, I was simply carried along by his eloquence; so now I can only try to tell you what he made me see and feel of the great kingdom of God he is trying to establish.

From the first words he spoke* I got the idea that his kingdom was to be one of happiness and, strange to say, this happiness did not arise from outward

* Matthew, chapters 5, 6, 7.

conditions of wealth or power; it did not arise from grasping and struggling and conquering in contests with others; it belonged to the poor not to the rich, to the meek not to the proud, to the merciful not to the exacting, to the peace-makers not to the war-makers, it was the reverse of our Roman ideas of happiness.

At first I thought he was trying to make the conquered content with their hard lot, to cheer and comfort the weak and oppressed; but there was a strange incitement that thrilled me and, as I looked upon the eager faces of the listeners, I saw them awaken to lofty purpose and splendid hope; a happiness that was independent of rank and station might itself be more lofty and splendid than the highest station, not only independent of it but itself high above it. We Romans are proud of ruling the world but are not very happy in ruling it, nor is the world much happier for our rule. We patricians are proud of our noble rank but are we happy in our palaces or are our clients and slaves, the great mass of our people, happier for our being lifted so high above them? Have we Roman nobles secured the noblest happiness within our reach? I cannot tell how it was done, I cannot quote the splendid, flowing sentences that came from his lips, but somehow he made me see a nobler manhood than I had ever dreamed of before, made me ambitious to be a nobleman not merely of Rome but of the race of mankind. Then too I saw the faces of the multitude light up with hope and purpose as they caught the spirit of his great oration, as through his flowing, stately eloquence he poured his ideas and his power

into their minds and hearts, and he made me feel that it was as possible for the lowest farmer in that crowd as it was for me, the proud Roman, to aspire to, to strive for and to attain the noblest manhood, that all men of whatever nationality, of whatever rank, had equal right and equal obligation to become noblemen.

There was a great deal in this wonderful oration that I could not fully understand, especially about the religion of this people. It seems they believe there is but one God and that he has a special interest in their nation, and it seemed that Jesus had the strongest faith in this one God but also believed that he extended his interest to all nations. It seems they believe this God has given them certain laws, and some of their teachers limit these laws to outward acts, but Jesus insists they should govern the mind and heart as well as the acts of man. He used some very striking sayings in speaking of these laws, so striking that they hold fast in my memory and stir my conscience. He said "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath commited adultery with her already in his heart." He said "He that is angry with his brother is in danger of being judged by God" and he insists that all men are our brothers. He commanded "Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you." He gave also a general rule for thinking, feeling and acting which, it seems to me, forces us to acknowledge that all men, even our slaves, have equal rights: he said "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." I wonder if we could have slaves at all if we kept this rule. But not only did he describe how men should treat each

other in their action and regard them in their thoughts as brothers but he urged them in this way to serve and grow like their God: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect; do good even to your enemies, so shall ye be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the unthankful and the evil; be ye merciful even as your Father is merciful." Is not that a wonderful thought of God, a father not only as creating and ruling as we think of Jupiter, but as having a fatherly feeling for all men, being kind and merciful even to the evil?

So this great oration upon the kingdom Jesus is trying to establish shows it is not for his nation alone but for all the nations, and also that it is most unlike the kingdom of power, unlike our Roman Empire. He began by describing it as the kingdom of happiness but, as he swept on in the torrent of his most thrilling eloquence, it became the kingdom of self-respect when each man respects himself as the son of God and respects all other men as his brothers; and, having this deep respect in his heart, he regards himself and regards his fellow-man, of whatever race or rank, as a child of his Father in heaven; and as that Father regards him in mercy and love so he must treat his fellowman as a real brother.

One can easily see that the empire of Rome must pass away if this kingdom of self-respect is to be established, that all our rank and splendid station must pass away when all men shall respect themselves and each other equally, that our class is not born to rule nor the mass of men to be ruled; that one class is not born to grasp and grow rich and powerful and

the mass of men to be taxed and to grow poor; but that all are to govern themselves into a growing likeness to their Father in heaven. This kingdom of happiness, this kingdom of self-respect, if it ever spreads over the earth, may well be called the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Jesus closed his great oration most impressively by stating with Jove-like authority that only the life builded in obedience to his teaching would last through all trials and be approved of God. When he had finished speaking, Jesus passed down the hillside to the Sea of Tiberias and so walked toward Capernaum, and great multitudes followed him. There was great discussion as we mingled with each other, concerning the ideas of the kingdom he was trying to establish. A learned Greek said with a sneer "He speaks of himself and his few lowly followers as the light of the world, his is a very small world bounded by these green hills, he evidently has never heard of Athens and the groves of philosophy, never heard of Socrates and Plato: it is absurd that his teachings should compare with theirs, or ever take the place of theirs." A Roman commander of a legion, walking with us, advocated the rule of the many by the few, he thought that Jesus himself would see the impossibility of his kingdom of the masses, of self-respecting manhood, if he should visit the capital of the world; if he should tread the Forum he would see that the power enthroned in the senate and the emperor was needed to keep the masses in order.

One of the religious leaders of this people turned to us with lofty scorn, "Oh, that kingdom that Jesus

advocates is not the kingdom we are looking forward to; ours, too, is a kingdom of glory and power when our God will give us the rule over all the earth; you Romans then will feel how it is to be ruled by us as you now rule us." But the people generally, those with whom I have been living for the past few months in their towns and villages, were eager in their approval of the kingdom, only they confined it largely to themselves, they failed to grasp the teaching of Jesus that it was to take in, in its broad sweep, all the races and classes of mankind. I confess that it is this that startles me, I can see the grandeur of the idea, but how it can ever be brought about, I fail to see; but when I was under the spell of his presence and eloquence it seemed to me it would surely come to pass: when all men would regard themselves as children of God and think and feel and act toward each other as such in the universal kingdom of self-respect, the kingdom of God on earth. Some of my friends from Nazareth thought that Jesus, by his more than human power, would sweep away all opposition and establish his kingdom whenever he chose, but it seems to me that power cannot do this, that the sweep of armies over the nations would be in vain, that the kingdom of self-respect and respect for all men must grow within men, that it cannot be forced from without; and I have heard that Jesus himself often insists upon this nature of his kingdom.

This letter had to be broken off here; and now after more than a year has passed, I take it up again to tell you more of this strange people and this wonderful man.

When I reached Capernaum I found there several Roman nobles about to undertake the daring journey across the desert to Babylon; they wanted to rival the famous ride of Nebuchadnezzar when he was besieging Jerusalem and, on some emergency of state, rode straight across the desert to his capital; it was thought impossible, but what the world-conqueror could do centuries ago these young Romans thought they could do as well. The novelty and danger of the adventure greatly appealed to me and, at their urgent request, I joined them. I wanted to feel the spell of the vast silence of the desert, to feel the warmth of the sun by day, to gaze upon the brilliant stars by night, to press on to the receding, far-off horizon by day and by night and then to visit the far-famed capital city of the vast, ancient world-empire. Our trip far exceeded our anticipations and I will fully describe it to you as soon as I can secure a little leisure. Coming back we passed up the river-valley until we were opposite Palmyra and we visited for several weeks that sparkling gem of the desert and so came on south to this land again where my companions left me to return to Rome. For several weeks I rested at the summer palace of Pilate, the governor, on the eastern slope of Mount Hermon; his wife, Calpurnia and her charming daughter, Livia, with their large retinue were spending the hot months in the delightful cool of the mountain. As you know my warm admiration for Livia and my hopes concerning her, you can faintly imagine my delight at being their guest and then to accompany them on their leisurely return to Jerusalem. This living so long with the nobility in my

adventure in strange lands, this luxurious, splendid life with Calpurnia and her daughter have to a great degree dimmed my interest in the wonderful Jesus of Nazareth and in his kingdom; but on our leisurely journey south, we have stopped at many cities and palaces and have heard a great deal about him and his vast influence with the people; and Calpurnia has herself become very deeply interested in him. Many things the people tell about him seem too wonderful to be true: that he fed a vast multitude, some say five thousand men, with a few loaves and fishes; that he stilled a great tempest on the Sea of Tiberias by a quiet command to the winds and the waves; that he stood by a grave where a friend of his had been buried for several days and at his command his friend had come forth from the grave alive and well.

I now have been living in Jerusalem for over a month, I have apartments in one of its ancient palaces and am a frequent guest in the palace of the governor. Pilate always speaks of Jesus with a sneer, says the stories told of his deeds are beyond belief and that his kingdom is a wild vision; but Calpurnia always speaks of him with admiration, believes in his wonderful works and thinks his kingdom would bring blessings to all nations. Among the people of this, their capital city, there is the same division of opinion. The masses of the people admire and believe in him but the leaders in wealth and in social position and especially in religion are open and severe in antagonizing him: they recognize instinctively that their supremacy would be swept away if his kingdom should be established.

Two days ago there was wild excitement in the city. There was a rumor in the morning that Jesus of Nazareth would enter the city that day and multitudes went out of the eastern gate and across the valley and up the Mount of Olives to meet him. He was accompanied by a large number of his enthusiastic followers; when the crowds from the city met them they formed a great procession, slowly coming down the mountain toward the city, and they filled the air with their acclamations and their religious songs. Jesus was riding upon an ass and the people caught at once the significance of that, as the ass was the animal chosen by their ancient kings when they rode in state; they acclaimed him with wild joy as their king and cast their garments and the branches of palm trees in the way before him. We were upon the roof of the governor's palace and witnessed the joyous procession passing down the hill and across the valley and entering the city, we could hear the enthusiastic shouts "All hail to the King." One of his officers suggested to Pilate there might be danger to his rule from this coming King, but he answered with a sneer "There is not a soldier in the crowd, nor a sword, nor a spear, I do not need to lift a finger against such a King as that."

Today I have listened to another great oration by Jesus of Nazareth and a stronger contrast, both in the circumstances and in the nature of the oration, with that I heard a year ago, could not be imagined. That was upon the hillside near the Sea of Tiberias and to a crowd gathered from the nearby towns; this was in the court of the temple, a more splendid building

than any temple I have ever seen or heard of in Rome or in the wide world, and to a crowd from the capital city, and especially to the leaders of the people, to the nobility of the nation. That oration was upon the nobility and happiness of the kingdom of self-respect, the kingdom of God, among all classes and races of men; this oration was upon the degradation and wretchedness of the class that lived for itself and oppressed others, that opposed the kingdom of God on earth. In the morning I met my former friends from Nazareth, they had come to the city with Jesus and were now his devoted followers and I went with them to the temple.

There were several thousand people in the court of the temple, eager listeners to a great contest that was going on between the Rulers of the temple and Jesus of Nazareth. The Rulers were clad in their robes of office, proud of their place and their power, men of great ability and keenness in defending their position; he was clad in the garb of the common people and stood unattended and alone before them but eager and able to advance his cause. There were many things about their religion that I could not fully understand but from what I could grasp and from their attitude and from the expression of the people I easily discovered that the rulers were being baffled and defeated in every position that they took. They challenged him on several questions of their law and he answered them promptly and in a way that upon that question put them to silence; they were shown to be wrong but they would not acknowledge that he was right; each defeat seemed so complete that it roused

them only to still fiercer opposition and they soon brought forward another challenge. I could not help feeling a great sympathy for them; they were virtually men of my class and, that they should be put to shame before the people they ruled, awakened my pity. At length they were silenced. Jesus had answered their last challenge in such a way that the murmur of the people warned them that their case was hopeless. Jesus then turned upon them and challenged them with a question of their national and religious history. I did not understand it fully but I was amazed at its effect upon them; they consulted with each other a long time and failed to give him any answer at all. But it was quite evident that, though he had answered all their challenges and though they could not answer even his first question, they were only incensed to greater opposition to him and his claims.

There followed a long and most impressive silence. All wondered what would come next but it was manifest that it would not come from the rulers of the temple and the people: they were powerless; it would come from the great Teacher of Nazareth. My friends and I had pressed through the crowd and stood among his followers, quite near to him. There was the same Jove-like majesty and power in the man that had so impressed me a year ago. He looked around upon his followers and the crowd of people, with tenderness as a mother would look upon her children; then he looked upon the rulers of the people gathered before him, and as he looked all the tenderness left his face and a great indignation gathered

there, an anger that blazed in every feature and flashed from his eyes. He stepped back from these proud leaders as if he were about to hurl a thunderbolt to destroy them, and when he spoke there was in his wonderful voice the tone of a judge passing an irrevocable sentence of destruction upon those confessedly unworthy to live among men. Such a denunciation,* I am sure, never came from human lips: a denunciation of the proud leaders of the people in the very center of their power, in the temple itself where they ruled in the name of their God; and as he spoke, Jesus of Nazareth seemed to be more than a man, it seemed as if their God had taken possession of him and spoke through him.

Again I wish I could tell you the very words of his stern denunciation but even then I could not charge them with the fire of his wrath, but I can give you only the impression they made upon me.

He denounced them as having betrayed the trust God gave them: they were to establish his kingdom on earth, instead they had grasped place and power for themselves; they had not only lorded it over the people they were to have served, but they had abused their power in their own selfish lives, and had resisted all efforts made by others to establish the kingdom, as they were now resisting him; they were acting now as their class had acted in all past ages, selfishly elevating themselves and abusing men, not entering the kingdom themselves and not suffering others to enter, and persecuting those who were trying to establish God's kingdom of self-respect among all men. He

* Matthew, chapter 23.

hurled woe after woe upon them as false men, pretending to serve God and man when they only served themselves. They stood before him as long as men could bear such indignant denunciation and then they fled from his presence. In an instant his indignation gave place to an infinite compassion, and with thrilling tenderness he spoke to the city itself: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

Now occurred a most wonderful thing. Some of his followers told Jesus that certain Greeks who had come to the feast, wished to see him. He responded* most graciously, insisting that his kingdom would spread as the light over the whole earth, would take in all nations, and all who followed him would be the children of light. He spoke also, of losing his own life for the kingdom, of laying down one's life for others instead of making others live for oneself, as the leaders did; that one should be so true to God that he would live for and be willing to die for the establishing his kingdom. Then looking up to heaven, a mysterious and wonderful light shone on his face, whether shining from within, from consecration of spirit, or from above, the approval of his spirit, who could tell; and he lifted his voice in adoring prayer: "Father glorify thy name." Then there came a voice from heaven, I heard it distinctly and understood the words, the mysterious voice said "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

*John 12. 20–36.

Here ended this thrilling day. Do you wonder that I am greatly impressed by this Jesus of Nazareth and that his followers have full confidence in him? I close this letter in haste as tomorrow morning Pilate sends messengers to Rome and I will send it by them to you.

CHAPTER X

THE STORY OF THE GREAT ORATION BY THE APOSTLE PETER

A Letter from Shemuel the Pharisee to His Brother in Alexandria

When you left us for your home on the morning after the Passover Sabbath we all thought we had put an end to Jesus of Nazareth and his phantom kingdom. You remember how he denounced us in the temple in the presence of the people, denounced us who for many years had led the people in their religious life and had maintained the temple-worship, how you were justly indignant at his trying to place ignominy upon us, and how you acted with us as we speedily brought him under the condemnation of our hightest court and compelled the Roman governor to crucify him. His deluded followers thought he had more than human power, that he led a charmed life, but he and his power crumbled at our touch and he died upon the shameful cross. We could not indeed, for a time, account for the great darkness that came upon us at noonday as he hung upon the cross, nor could we realize its meaning; we feared it might be the frown of God upon our hasty action. You said I remember that such sudden darkness sometimes came over the valley of the Nile when a great wind filled the

whole heavens with a black cloud of sand from the desert, and we thought it might be something of that kind though there was no movement in the heavens, only the silent falling of the pall of blackness. As it lasted hour after hour we were more and more filled with awe and growing dread that God had condemned us. Then there came that terrible cry from Jesus on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now we understood the awful darkness; God had indeed frowned, but not upon us the leaders of his people, but upon Jesus. Then the darkness passed away, we were again confident, strong in the sunlight; but Jesus was already dead: the frown of God had killed him.

So we rested in peace on the Sabbath day, you with us in our home and in the temple of our God, and early the next morning you left us for Egypt. You scarcely could have been out of sight of Jerusalem when a wonderful rumor spread through the city that Jesus had risen from the dead. Some of our leading men had heard that Jesus had said he could not be held of death and they had persuaded the Roman governor to seal the tomb and place a guard about it so that his followers could not possibly steal the body and then say he had risen from the dead. After bidding you farewell at the western gate I had gone to the palace of the high priest and was present with several others when the Roman guard brought their report. Romans as they were, they seemed bewildered with terror; most of the ten men had been sleeping on the ground, but two had been marching to and fro before the great stone slab that closed the entrance into the rock

sepulchre; there had come an earthquake shock that woke the sleepers and they had all seen an angel, a being of light, and glorious strength, come down from heaven; he fearlessly rolled away the stone and sat upon it; and with a look of scorn, he cast down the soldiers to the ground. When they recovered, one by one, they fled from the tomb and came to the high priest. Their terror communicated itself to us, we saw our dismal failure, and dreaded that others should see it too, as soon they must.

The next morning I was again at the palace of the high priest, as were many others of our leaders, in much trepidation but eager to hear what further news there might be of this marvelous event. There I met John, the son of Zebedee, he is a cousin of the high priest you know, very intimate with him and a frequent visitor at the palace. He is also an ardent believer in Jesus of Nazareth and has been very close to him for about three years, has followed him constantly in his journeying through Judea and Galilee and lived in very familiar companionship with him. He is, as you know, a very intelligent man of rich gifts of speech, charm of manner, and absolutely clear truthfulness of character. I know of no one I respect more highly or trust more implicitly, and the high priest has the same regard for him and confidence in him. We have wondered and been grieved that he should be a follower of Jesus and should have adopted his views about the kingdom of God, so different from ours, but we respect his sincerity and loyalty. The other leaders had left the palace, I remained for a while with the high priest when John came and was

admitted at once to our presence. He was in much excitement and eager with joy. He had been in deep sorrow and depression the day after the crucifixion of Jesus: a broken, disappointed man; now he was elated and triumphant and he seemed confident that what had changed him would change us. He told us in his eager, graphic way of his experience of the day before; he had heard the rumor that Jesus was risen from the dead and had hastened to the tomb; he found it empty: there was no sign of any violence or disorder or even of haste. The stone door was rolled away and he had entered the tomb; the grave-clothes were folded in order and left behind, but the body of Jesus was not there. During the day he had talked with several women of their number who, early in the morning, had seen two angels at the tomb who had told them that Jesus was risen from the dead; later he spoke with Mary Magdalene, a very devoted follower of Jesus, who told him that she had seen and talked with him; and still later Peter, another of his disciples and very intimate with John, had assured him that he had seen Jesus that very day alive and well.

When evening came, John and other close followers of Jesus were assembled together; while they were eagerly talking of what they had seen and heard that day, two disciples who had walked from the village of Emmaus, came into the room and gave them a vivid account of their having had a long talk with Jesus on their way to Emmaus and of their having shared their evening meal with him and then he had vanished away from their sight: they had not recognized him until he broke bread with them, they did

not know how he had vanished from them, but they were sure they had seen him alive and well and had talked with him. Then John told us that while the disciples were astonished at what they had heard Jesus himself was present with them; how he came they did not know, not through the door for that was locked, but he was there and he spoke to them about the kingdom he and they were to establish; to remove all possible doubt from their minds that it was he himself and no other, and no mere spirit, he showed them his pierced hands and feet and his spear-thrust side, and he also ate an humble meal with them as he had so long been accustomed to do. John said he remained with them an hour or more, that he spoke as freely to them and moved about among them as freely as he had done a week before, that it was the same Jesus in his action, his speech, the tone of his voice, the look of his eyes, his whole manner and appearance and especially in his thoughts and feelings, in his whole personality. He had seen Jesus and recognized him as fully, and Jesus had seen him and been as close and familiar to him only a few hours before he was speaking to us, as he had been during the past three years. He knew Jesus had been dead for he had helped take him down from the cross and bury him, he knew that no man could possibly live with such a spear-thrust in his side. Just as certainly he knew that Jesus had risen from the dead, he had seen him and talked with him the night before, three days after his burial.

There was something mysterious about him he acknowledged, he appeared and disappeared at will, he still had the spear-thrust in his side, but he who was

dead lived again. "I have seen him," he said. "I have heard him. I have touched him. I am sure he is the same Jesus I have known so long and so well. He is alive who was dead. He is, as he said, the Son of God. The grave could not hold him. He is risen from the dead."

We were astonished at this story of John, the high-priest seemed deeply impressed and greatly alarmed. We could not question John's sincerity or the strength of his conviction. After John left us we consulted long together. What can be the meaning of this? What will the outcome be? Can it be possible that Jesus was more than human, that God had sent him to teach about his kingdom, that God approved of him? Then what meant the darkness at the crucifixion, was it God's frown upon us? But what meant that despairing cry of Jesus upon the cross? We were bewildered and in great trepidation. Was it possible that we had sent the Lord's Christ to the cross? Was it possible that he had risen from the dead? What would he do now? What would happen next? We could only wait and see.

As we waited day after day our apprehension increased and spread through the whole city. Days would pass when we heard nothing; but the silence was oppressive, it awakened expectation of some mysterious presence, of some impending event that could not be guarded against or warded off, that must come upon us.

Thus from one and another intimate friend of Jesus would come an account of another meeting with him who had risen from the dead, sometimes he had been

seen by a large number at a time, and always they were sure it was Jesus who had met with them, and always he had spoken to them of the kingdom he was to establish among men.

But there was always the same mystery about him, he appeared without warning, unexpectedly, and he vanished from their sight in the same mysterious way; and none of them could tell where he abode when they did not see him, no one could tell how to meet him or where. He might meet them at any time or in any place but it altogether depended upon his will. So his followers came to feel that he might be present with them though they could not see him, and that he might at any time appear to them and speak to them. This feeling of a mysterious presence and of an impending appearance spread among the people generally so the whole city became oppressed with it; and it especially took possession of our hearts who had led the people to crucify him. The followers of Jesus, while they were awed by the all-pervading feeling in their hearts, seemed to long for his appearance and for further instruction about the kingdom; but we, who had opposed his kingdom and had crucified him, dreaded with an ever-increasing fear his suddenly appearing to us.

About ten days ago the most marvelous thing occurred so marvelous that we would not find it possible to believe it had we not been assured by the witnessing of men in whom we have confidence, the followers of Jesus who had already told of his being alive from the dead, and now, especially, by the evidence given us by two members of our highest court. You re-

member there were two members of the court who opposed sentencing Jesus to death, and after his death these two men took charge largely of his burial; they were believers in Jesus and in his kingdom. These two honorable members of our court, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, some ten days ago were with many other followers of Jesus when he met them in this city; he had a long and very intimate talk with them about his kingdom; they asked him many questions, he gave them very clear answers. He told them they were to stay in Jerusalem until they received power from God from heaven and that then they were to establish his kingdom here in Jerusalem and in all Judea, after that in Samaria and even to the uttermost parts of the earth. He assured them that he was the promised Messiah, the great King, and that his kingdom was to begin in Jerusalem but was to spread his rule over all nations, that it was for all mankind. He then led them out of the city towards Bethany and when they had reached the brow of the Mount of Olives he paused, and while he still talked with them in loving counsel, and while they looked upon him with adoring gaze, he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and as he blessed them he slowly rose from the earth and as they looked he ascended into the heavens and a cloud received him out of their sight. Now as they looked up steadfastly into heaven two angels in shining apparel stood by them and said, "This same Jesus which has just been received up into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."

These ten days have been filled with an intense ex-

pectation, the whole city has been possessed by it; ordinary affairs have of course gone on as usual, as they must always do, but there has been little interest in them. The followers of Jesus have been waiting and longing for the promised power from God, for the promised return of Jesus from heaven, and for the triumphant establishment of his kingdom. The people generally and especially we, the leaders of the people, have been waiting with dread for some awful manifestation of God's wrath. Our confidence that we were right in sentencing Jesus to death has been displaced by a terrible fear that we have crucified the God-appointed King and that he will come to inflict his sentence upon us. Now this morning the expected has happened but in such a strange way that I can hardly describe it. There has been a great concourse of people in the temple courts at the close of the morning's sacrifice, and the most intense excitement, people swayed by a vast power to strange unheard-of actions. I have witnessed the most wonderful events and have been swept along by them, I have just heard the most thrilling oration ever uttered,* I am sure, and have been swayed by its mysterious power and have witnessed its stupendous effects.

It seems many followers of Jesus were assembled early this morning in their usual place in the temple and were praying to God to give them power to establish his kingdom when there was a sound of a rushing, mighty wind from heaven and an appearance of tongues of fire resting upon each one of them and they were all filled with a mysterious force that impelled

* The Acts, 2d chapter.

them to speak the praises of God in proclaiming his kingdom. The multitude of the people assembling for the morning sacrifice heard the sound of the rushing wind from heaven and saw the tongues of fire upon the brows of these men, and they quickly gathered about them and were amazed at their courage, enthusiasm and gifts of speech; the most wonderful thing of all was that the men of different nations, for there were many such assembled at the feast, heard these men who proclaimed the kingdom of God each speak in his own language wherein he was born. All the followers of Jesus seemed to share equally the marvelous power from on high, and each one seemed qualified to speak in the needed tongue of the nation he addressed: the message of the kingdom was thereby addressed to all men of all nations equally for the kingdom was proclaimed for all mankind.

While there were a few among the followers of Jesus who were of the upper ranks, the leaders of the people, the large number of them were rude, uncultured men, peasants from Galilee, the lower class of people, but they all shared alike in this mysterious power: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and the slaves from their households alike had this gift from God. We, the leaders of the people, had always thought we were appointed of God to be above the mass of the people, to rule over and to lead them in religion and in all the affairs of life, to live in the ease and enjoyment of luxury and to move in the lofty realm of thought, while the common people were to labor with their hands and to be content if they had the necessaries of life. We had instinctively felt that

the kingdom of God that Jesus was trying to establish would overthrow our leadership not only but would lift up the lower ranks of life in a gradual development of their powers, would give them self-respect and a regard for the rights of all that would make them above the need of our leadership. This increased and intensified our antagonism to Jesus until we had him crucified by the Romans; we thought in this we were advancing and protecting our God-given rights, that God was with us; and the Romans, who acted with us, had the same instinctive opposition to Jesus from their position of leadership in worldly power. Then came the resurrection of Christ and our dreadful fear that God condemned us; now this wonderful power from on high was given to form this new kingdom. The excitement was almost overpowering for most of us felt awe in the presence of this gift so evidently from God and were greatly perplexed by the position in which it placed us; though there were some who tried to account for the enthusiasm of the followers of Jesus by saying they were full of new wine.

At last Peter, a special friend of Jesus, one who had been intimate with him during the years of his public life of teaching, stood upon the platform in the court of the temple and with a loud voice called all the people to listen to him. His is the oration I must describe to you.

He spoke from the first as if his power came from God and he simply poured it out upon our minds and hearts with the utmost conviction and confidence that it would take possession of us and fully control us, as it controlled him.

He was a tall and powerful looking man, clothed in the garb of the common people, evidently one of them; he had a ringing, far-reaching voice, a flashing eye, and much animation of manner. He roused our attention at once, then held us spellbound by his earnest, sincere effort to show all of us the meaning of the marvelous experience we were having. "These men and women," he said, "as you all know, are the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. They are possessed, as you see, with a vast, mysterious power. This power is not that of new wine, you recognize that explanation as absurd, impossible. What is it then, that these common people, uncultured, uneducated, should suddenly be raised to this lofty plane of speaking and acting? There is absolutely but one way of accounting for it. This is the fulfillment of God's promise to you by his prophet Joel, that he would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. Consider how Joel describes this gift, and how that which you are witnessing exactly corresponds to his description: your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and you witness it: not a few, not here and there one, a learned man, a scribe, a pharisee, a priest has been made a prophet; but all the followers of Jesus, the humblest as well as the highest, all your sons and daughters who follow him, all flesh. Your young men see visions, your old men dream dreams; yea, even the slaves, the bondmen and bondmaidens, upon them will I pour my Spirit and they shall prophesy. And God declares that he will overturn in the heavens above and among the powers of the earth, working such changes among the nations in establishing his kingdom in the earth, and that whosoever shall call

upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. The kingdom is not for any particular class nor for any particular race, it is for all men, whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord. These followers of Jesus have the spirit of God and they, as you all witness, are prophesying, are proclaiming the kingdom among men."

Then this common man Peter, with quiet courage, earnestness, and absolute faithfulness to his Lord and his mission, turned to us, the leaders of the people and to those we had led, and charged us with the death of Jesus. "You know, ye men of Israel, that God approved of Jesus of Nazareth by mighty works and wonders and signs, yet you, in the face of such knowledge, have taken him and crucified him. But God has raised him from the dead; of this your great king, David spoke, not of himself, for as you know he is dead and buried and his tomb is with us to this day, but of one greater even than he, that God would raise him from the dead. Not only did God raise Jesus from the dead but he has exalted him to his right hand. David has not ascended into heaven but he said, 'The Lord said unto my Lord sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' Let all the house of Israel know therefore that God hath made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. This Lord and Christ, exalted at the right hand of God in heaven, hath poured forth his Spirit upon his followers as ye see and hear."

We were not only swayed by this speech of Peter, we were crushed by it. We felt that, in our proud and arrogant resistance of Jesus of Nazareth, we had

resisted God; that we had blindly and wickedly rejected the great Teacher sent from God; that we had, in our desperate sinfulness, crucified the Son of God, our promised Messiah, our divine King. There was no possibility of evading the charge, there was no possibility of finding any justification or excuse, there was no possibility of flying from the just indignation of him who was exalted at the right hand of God, there was no possibility of escaping the wrath of God against our guilt. Strong men, conscience-stricken, broke down; proud leaders of the people came to these humble followers of Jesus for counsel and help; pharisees, priests, as well as the mass of the people came to them saying, "Brethren, brethren, what shall we do?"

Now Peter with his companions, while triumphantly vindicated in their loyalty to Christ, had a brotherly feeling toward us, the conscience-stricken. He exhorted us to repent and to trust in Jesus as our Lord and King; he promised us that we should be welcomed into the kingdom and should share in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to qualify us to spread this kingdom in the whole earth.

Wonderful has been the change wrought in me and in many others by this great speech of Peter. I, who when you were here a few weeks ago enlisted your help in bringing Jesus of Nazareth to the Roman cross, now write this full account of my change that I may enlist you also to become the follower with me of him who was raised from the dead, who is exalted at the right hand of God, who has poured out his Spirit upon his disciples. I beseech of you to own him who is the rightful King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

CHAPTER XI

THE STORY OF A GREAT ORATION BY THE APOSTLE PAUL

A Letter from Dionysius the Areopagite to Aristobulus, a Nobleman in Rome

You probably have still fresh in mind some of the impressions Athens made upon you when, recently, you spent a few days with me upon your return from the province of Macedonia of which you had been the governor for several years. You remember the groves of philosophy and some of the questions we heard discussed by the various schools of the Epicureans and the Stoics. You remember the many temples and statues of the gods in the city and how devout the great numbers of the people were, often contending for the worth of the many gods of our inheritance, while a few stood aloof in proud disdain. You remember the great market-place where large numbers of our citizens gathered to hear the news or to hear great causes advocated by our orators. You remember how our city, beautiful for situation, had been adorned by the genius of many artists through past ages with magnificent buildings and splendid statues. You remember how you were impressed by the eager intellectual life throbbing here, and by the taste for beauty and culture which abounded among the guests I gath-

ered to meet you in my palace. Now I write to tell you of a most eloquent oration that I recently heard and of the great change it has wrought in my life.

I think I told you how our highest court is composed and of its jurisdiction. When one has served as Archon or ruler of Athens for one year and his administration has been entirely for the good of the city and his private life has been without reproach, he becomes a member of the Court of the Areopagus for life. I have been a member of this court for the past seven years and there are now associated with me fifteen others who have attained this high honor and important office. There have been but few Archons in our history who have not stood this test, and they have been driven into obscurity by their greed and corruption.

For many hundred years this court has been the highest in Greece; it has had jurisdiction not only over the affairs of Athens but questions have been submitted to it from the other states of Greece and from other nations. Since you Romans have conquered Greece and all other nations our jurisdiction has been limited to Athens itself, but your government has recognized and upheld our court as worthy of the high honor of supremacy here.

One of the great questions to be decided by this court is that of religion. What new feature of a religion or what new kind of religion shall be permitted in Athens must be finally decided by our court. Recently a man called Paul, the apostle or sent-messenger of Jesus Christ, has been publicly proclaiming the religion of Christ in the city and has awakened such an

interest in it that some of the philosophers and leading men called together the Court of the Areopagus and brought him before us. Our meeting-place is on the top of Mars' Hill, where a large space has been cut out, in the solid rock, nearly circular in form. In this open space the suitors gather before the court, which sits upon the bench hewn from the rock. The sky is the only roof. The magnificence and stir of the city is at a distance, amid bare surroundings the court is lifted up into the silence of the sky; it there hears and decides its cases. There are no buildings or statues upon Mars' Hill but the associations of the place are very stimulating, there for many hundred years our court has heard its important cases, and there, in the beginning of our history and the history of our gods, occurred the great trial of Mars himself before the many gods, his peers, when he was charged by Neptune with the murder of his son. Mars was acquitted by the gods since the killing of the son of Neptune had been done in battle, in honorable warfare; and so the hill itself bears his name since he was vindicated in the first great trial held there. Sometimes our court holds its session in the night-time in order that the judges may not be swayed by the personal bearing of the suitor and especially may not be charmed by his art, the action perhaps of a fine orator, but may decide dispassionately upon the clear statements made before them.

In this case the court was called to meet two hours after sunset. Those who had heard Paul speak in the marketplace said that a large part of his persuasive power was due to the evident fact that his cause had

full possession of him, it expressed itself not only in the words he uttered but, in his great emotion, it shone in his face and flashed from his eyes, it swayed his body and called forth the most stirring gestures so that the whole man was filled with the eloquence of his message. In order that the court might judge dispassionately on such an important matter it was deemed best that we should not be too much under the spell of such an orator. Some of my own friends and a few of the most intelligent slaves of my household had been persuaded to accept this new religion, and their description of the advocate showed me that much of his influence came from his personality, as much, perhaps more, than from the reasonableness of his message.

On this occasion I went to our place of meeting by way of the Acropolis. You remember this hill back of our city is splendidly adorned with temples and statues and the walks through the groves have all the charm that nature and art can give them. As I left the market-place and, by the broadest avenue of the city, approached the hill I caught a glimpse of the bright, golden spear-head of the colossal statue of Athene, the masterpiece of our greatest sculptor, Phidias, which stands near the summit. This spear-head can be seen far out at sea by the sailors returning from their voyages of adventure or profit, and this evening it had caught the last rays of the setting sun and flashed in my eyes for a few minutes and then was lost among the tree-tops. As I, climbing the hill, passed through the groves and by the many statues and temples, I was impressed as so often before by

our splendid history, by the stories of gods and men in their struggles for place and power from the early beginnings of time. Then before me, crowning the hill, appeared the Parthenon, that great temple to Minerva, builded during the golden period of our history, by Pericles one of our most gifted sons. In perfect proportions and made of the softly glowing Pentelic marble, this is the finest piece of architecture in all the world.

And as I looked I thought again of that great battle of the gods fought here before the city was built. Neptune, the god of the stormy seas conquering the earth, and Minerva, goddess of peaceful lands adorning the earth, fought to decide which should be the builder and patron of the future city. Athene, the victor gave her name to the city and our world-famed Parthenon is fittingly dedicated to Athene Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. Surely he who is a member of the highest court of Athens should be wise to hear and to decide upon the causes coming before it. I then passed on down the hill, crossed the narrow, shallow valley, climbed the hill of Mars and took my seat on the stone bench of the court of the Areopagus. It was yet early and I was for a little while alone. I could hear the faint murmur of the city, lying at the feet of the two hills, growing fainter as the evening advanced. I could see the outlines of the Parthenon, standing out against the evening sky, growing indistinct as the evening shadows gathered and the night took possession of the earth. Soon the heavens were filled with stars; what were they, those bodies of light filling the dark heavens; were they the dwelling-places

of the gods when they wearied of the mountain-tops and the groves and the streams and the seas of the earth, when they grew tired of the ways of mankind and withdrew to their homes of light and looked down upon the remote earth and its little doings? Surely the gods were not merely of the far-gone past, they were present now and must be greatly interested as our court was about to hear the claims of a new religion to the favor of our city.

As the hour approached my colleagues gathered and took their places, not one was missing, and the darkness and silence of night covered Mars' Hill.

Then we saw a number of dim figures gathering in the open space before us, the leading men of the city had brought Paul to plead his cause; and one of them, in a few well-chosen words, craved from us a patient hearing of what he called the most remarkable claim that had ever been presented to our court.

There were several things about the great orator and his wonderful oration* that, from the first word, impressed me with ever-increasing power. We could not see him, except vaguely as standing on a platform a little above the others; we could not discern whether he were tall or short, heavy or light, straight or crooked, we could not see his face whether noble or marred, we could not see the pose of his body nor the gestures he made, only that he moved actively; but we could hear his voice without missing a single word or a single tone, a wonderful voice that stirred thought and feeling, that set all the fibers of our being tingling with its varied power, we were at once under its spell.

* The Acts 17. 16–34.

While this spell increased as he went on with his oration we no longer thought of it or of him at all but only of what he said. Then there grew upon us the impression that he was not so much arguing a cause before a court to gain our favorable verdict to permit him to proclaim it in the city, as that he was trying to persuade each one of us to believe in his cause; he was trying to pour his conviction, his emotion into our minds and hearts to turn us away from all our inherited beliefs and life-long practices and to believe and act with him in accepting the new religion. The very boldness of his effort won our admiration. Not only did he make this attempt but he seemed assured that he would accomplish it; he had such confidence in the truth of what he spoke that he was sure intelligent, fair-minded men listening to him would accept it; and that such men, at whatever cost to themselves, would act according to their new convictions. While this impression grew upon us to the very end of his oration, while we lost sight of him in the cause he so earnestly advocated to change our convictions and our lives, there grew upon my mind at least, this further feeling, that some one was speaking through him. It was a strange and awe-impelling feeling: that some god other than Athene Minerva of the Parthenon, other than Mars who had plead the first cause on this hill-top, that some other god, perhaps the god of the overhanging stars was speaking through Paul and was demanding of me my allegiance. This feeling once awakened in me grew until it took possession of me. I could not divest myself of it. I had to yield to it. This greatest orator I have ever heard lost him-

self in his cause, then gave the impression that he was the mouth-piece of a person, a God speaking through him, and as such he boldly demanded my full and prompt allegiance. The oration was long; it fully treated all the important subjects it touched, and most satisfactorily treated them, not ignoring or hiding a single difficulty; it was midnight before we went down the hill to our homes, and yet it seemed but a fleeting moment.

At the very beginning, without the least attempt at compliment, he acknowledged our attainments and our high qualities. What higher title could he give us: he addressed us as "Men of Athens"? What higher nature could he ascribe to us: "I see ye are very religious"? He then spoke of the many temples and statues in our city and of the many gods we worshipped. Thus he came to the main subject of his oration and we began to see his real object as well. "I see you are not satisfied with these many gods for you have an altar to An Unknown God, I want to speak to you of that unknown God and to win your worship for him."

From that time on he spoke as if there were no other gods; he lifted the unknown God so high in our thoughts that there was no need, no possible place for any other god; this God had made the earth and the heavens and all there was in existence and he was the ever-present, ever-ruling Lord of all.

This lofty thought of God had full possession of Paul, his mind and heart had no place for any other god and he spoke in such eloquent terms of the God over all, the God of self-existence, of vast creative

power, of wide, all-embracing dominion, that our minds and hearts were fascinated with the vision. Having given us this splendid thought of the one supreme God, he showed us with marvelous eloquence how we could not make any temple worthy to be his dwelling-place, the whole earth itself would not be great enough for him, the whole star-gemmed heavens would not be a roof for his temple, had he himself not made both earth and sky? The only temple for this supreme, all-creating, all-ruling God was the mind and heart of man. He had made all men, not only the men of Athens in our wide attainments and high culture, but men of all nations on the face of the earth and had given them this distinctive nature: that they should seek after this one God who had given them life and being, after their Source, their Father, the Father of their spirits. He said, "Some of your own writers that I have read have caught a glimpse of this great truth: that you are the offspring of God. Your religious nature shows you are akin to the great Spirit, the supreme God. You have been searching for him; your splendid hill encrusted with temples and altars and statues shows how you have searched for him; but you have not yet found him though he is near to every one of you, for he is the ever-present Spirit in whom we all live and move and have our being."

He then very frankly and fully described the way in which we had gone astray. "Ye have been seeking this unknown God but ye have looked too intently at the material creation about you; ye have imagined that he had a form, that by your art ye could carve him in gold or silver or stone; ye have devised gods like your-

selves in form and action; ye have lost sight of your own spiritual nature: that it is your spirits that are by their nature seeking God and it is only as ye look back of, beyond all material forms, that ye will be able to find your Source, your Father, himself a Spirit. Ye have degraded yourself and debased the Father of your spirits by creating your statues with your high ideals of beautiful forms and then worshipping these works of your hands as if they represented various gods of beauty or strength, alas, also of lust and war. God, the God I proclaim to you, has been greatly grieved by your thus debasing yourselves and degrading him, but he has been very patient with you and has sought you with great eagerness, and now he commands you to repent of all this wrong-thinking and wrong-feeling toward him."

He then spoke to us with great conviction and deep feeling that this unknown God had made himself fully and unmistakably known, that this great, ever-present, all-powerful, unseen Spirit back of all forms in nature had made himself clearly revealed in Jesus Christ. He claimed that Jesus Christ was God revealed in the flesh, that he was revealed not only in bodily form as we had imagined some of our gods to have become incarnate, but in the very spirit of man. He then fully and vividly described the life and teachings of Jesus Christ: how he had taught about God and man, and how, especially, he had lived showing us the nature of God, a just God requiring man to live rightly, and also a merciful God helping man to recover himself from his debasement; showing us also how each man should live a life of trust and love toward God and

toward his fellow-man. This Jesus Christ he set before us with such eloquence that he seemed to be in our presence and we eagerly admired him for his lofty teaching and splendid life. Then, almost overwhelmed by his feelings, he described how his own countrymen had hated Jesus Christ because he claimed to be the Son of God, and had persuaded the Romans to crucify him. But with eager triumph in his voice he told us that God had raised him from the dead, and that the risen Christ had sent him to preach this religion to all men in all the world. He then again called us to repent, to turn from our wrong views and actions towards God and man and to become the followers of Jesus Christ since God would strictly judge us according to this righteousness.

When he ceased speaking the silence of the night wrapped us round, the stillness of the stars looked down upon us. For awhile we lost sight of ourselves as the great court of the Areopagus trying a case on the hill of Mars and we, ourselves, seemed to be suitors in a higher court, being tried for our whole lives before Jesus Christ, the Judge, the Son of God, the Risen-from-the-dead, while the mysterious stars awaited his decision, sealing our destiny.

But this soon passed away; some of our members began to mock at the idea of any man ever having been raised from the dead; others said, "let us hear him again"; so this was the decision given to Paul: "we will hear thee again on this matter," and the session of the court ended at midnight.

As for me, that night as I returned from Mars' Hill, as I had a few hours before approached it, by way of

the Parthenon and the splendid hill of the Acropolis. I could not divest myself of the conviction that Paul had spoken the truth and that I must yield myself to the truth and become the follower of Jesus Christ: that all these splendid statues and temples were in vain, that Athene Minerva herself was only a vain imagination of man, and that the one great God revealed in Jesus Christ was the only true God.

In this conviction I still abide and it has taken full possession of my soul. I am now a confessed follower of Jesus Christ and am trying to live in his way, the way he taught and lived. I used to look upon my slaves as a lower race of beings, some of my slaves have also become followers of Jesus Christ, and I now regard them with a far-different feeling, indeed, I regard all slaves as my fellow-men. I used to look upon other nations as far beneath the Greeks, they were barbarians to me; I see a wide difference still in many ways, but I now regard them as my fellow-men. You may remember that some of the women of our city of highest culture were loose in their morals and were despised by noble men; I do not despise any of them now but would lift them up in purity of life, some of them have become followers of Jesus Christ with us and have become pure women. I used to look upon you Romans as hated conquerors who had taken away our place and nation, though some I regarded as my friends and recognized as truly noble, as I count you my friend; but now I am thinking and feeling toward our Roman conquerors, as to all other nationalities, as my fellow-men all made of one blood, all the offspring of the one God revealed in Jesus Christ.

I used to think of the gods as many and as often having evil passions and evil lives, and as often being in conflict, often injuring men; but now I know there are no such gods, that there is only one true God who has made me a spirit and made my nature to seek after him, and now I am satisfied I have found him in Jesus Christ and I am trying to live a righteous life like his.

So I write you this letter, not only to tell you of this wonderful oration of the Apostle Paul that I heard a few weeks ago on Mars' Hill, but with the hope that you will become with me a follower of Jesus Christ.

PART III
THE POETRY OF THE BIBLE

CHAPTER XII

THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF POETRY

The birth of poetry seems to have been on this wise. The family or tribe is gathered before the tent at close of day. A member returns and in great excitement tells of some strange adventure. His sentences are short, measured by intense feeling. The excitement spreads. Some one repeats a striking sentence, and others take it up in song, perhaps with some instrument of music. The enthusiasm grows, and he who tells the story and they who hear begin to describe by acting the main features of the adventure, and the measured step of march or dance soon becomes prominent in this general acting. According to the nature of the story it may end in a burst of popular frolic or in an act of solemn worship. As the monotonous days pass on this story of exciting adventure is repeated time and time again until it becomes enshrined in the memory and is ready on the lip of all.

The most ancient bit of this primitive poetry found in the Bible is in the fourth chapter of Genesis, it is called the Song of the Sword.

Lamech calls for attention—

> "Adah and Zillah hear my voice
> Ye wives of Lamech hearken to my speech."

He tells the story—

> "For I have slain a man for wounding me
> And a young man for bruising me."

He is confident of the justice of his cause—

> "If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold
> Surely Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

In this spontaneous rise of poetry there is a combination of story, music and imitative gesture.

Kinds of Poetry

In the development of poetry the progress is along the line of one or other of these three elements. If it is along the line of verse, the short measured sentences of the story-teller, we shall have *Epic Poetry*. The music and acting are mere accessories, they may be present or absent, the main element is the story told by the poet. The earliest development was probably along this line. The blind story-teller in ancient Greece pictured scenes of heroism that stir the heart of mankind in all times and climes. In the middle ages the minstrel found a ready audience in the hall of the Castle during the long winter evenings. Thus epic poetry grows and great epics are formed.

There are no epic poems in the Bible, though there are stories told in prose which have the epic ring and some end in epic songs. The story of Joseph with its vicissitudes of fortune, of David with its heroism and great deeds, of Daniel with his daring and success, are epic in spirit though not in form. Still as Hebrew

poetry is not widely divided in form from intense prose we can find little fault in Goethe for calling "Ruth the loveliest specimen of Epic poetry we possess."

If the main attention is paid to the element of imitative action we shall have *Dramatic Poetry*. It is not description but presentation, the poet does not tell the story, he brings the actors upon the scene and they speak for themselves. The Drama is acted poetry. The Opera is the drama with musical expression. The development along this line waits upon the congregation of men in great cities. It is poetry for large audiences who are to be impressed by scenes and action as well as by words.

The nearest approach to dramatic poetry in the Bible is the Book of Job, considered in Chapter XIV.

The Rhapsodies of the Prophets are spiritualized dramas,—no persons are seen,—but the air is full of voices, voices of Earth and Sky, voices of the Nations, the voice of God. The oratory of the prophets is often poetic and frequently dramatic.

If the main attention is paid to music we shall have *Lyric Poetry*. It need not be the music of instrument or of voice in song but the musical thought, the deep harmonies of Nature's many voices caught by the sensitive soul of the poet and voiced by him for kindred souls. The poet singing alone; the poet singing in the family with choice spirits; the poet singing in the Temple leading the praises of God, this is the lofty sphere of highest poetry. The story telling Epic, the imitative Drama are left far below, and the pure spirit of poetry looks out upon the face of nature and up into the face of God, and sings. In the progress of

poetry the development of the Lyric was probably slowest and latest, as it is most difficult and requires the greatest genius. The Epic concerns itself with the description of action. The Dramatic with the presentation of the actors, while the Lyric reflects upon the reality of things, the truth back of all action.

The Bible is peculiarly rich in Lyrical poetry. It is of this poetry that Milton says "There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion." In lofty thought, rich feeling and beautiful form they excel among the songs of mankind. Many of these lyrics seem to have been the result of long meditation and careful skill, to have been prepared with clear purpose and much artistic effort. Others seem to have been born of the occasion, the free and unpremeditated outburst of great genius. The burning thought and singing word springing from the brain and heart of the poet may have been as great a surprise to him as they are a delight to the world.

One of the most brilliant and famous poems of our own day is a lyric of this kind. Rudyard Kipling's Recessional. He says of it, "I did not write it. It wrote itself." The Navies of England gathered in review at the Queen's Jubilee and then sailed away. All parts of the great Empire sent their pomp and power to do her honor; the Nations of the world sent their representatives to her feet; then all the glorious scene vanished. But the vision was pictured in the soul of a great genius; he saw beyond the glory of it all, the real meaning, and the great song has the deep religious feeling of a Bible Poet. It is said that Kipling did not know how great it was, its

spontaneousness and timeliness blinded him as to its worth, and he threw it into the waste basket. But his wife rescued it and gave it to the world, and the world will not soon forget it.

Psalm 46 may be compared in spirit and form with the Recessional, the occasion which gave it birth may have been the great invasion of Sennacherib, and it may be called the *Song of Deliverance.* There are three strophes equal in six parallels, each having a refrain.

The action is crowded into the second strophe.

The city is described in the smooth flowing terms of peace and security.

"There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God."

The enemy gathering in eager angry haste compels the cry of alarm.

"The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved."

God's deliverance is easy, speedy and complete as by a flash of lightning.

"He uttered his voice, the earth melted."

Then follows the refrain of praise and confidence.

"The Lord of hosts is with us
The God of Jacob is our refuge."

The refrain is the basis of Kipling's, though to him is to be credited the telling addition, "Lest we forget," and even this sounds like an echo from the plains of Moab, the great poet of to-day catching up the words of Moses the great law-giver in his farewell orations.

Nature of Poetry

Concerning the nature of Bible poetry it may be said, that God is its inspiring theme. Goethe says, "What a glorious poem it would be to see how the world mirrors itself in a great soul." The poet catches the thought of God in his universe and reflects it in his song. Matthew Arnold says "poetry is the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth," that is, the inner reality of things. Poetry is the greatest of the arts, it has the power more than any other to image forth the universe to the mind and heart of man. "What an imagination God has," says Tennyson. The poet sees God in his universe, discerns God's plan, the ideal world, of which the real is only the shadow. Banish God from the universe and the charm is gone, the life and glory have departed, it gives no vision, it awakens no song, it can have no poet. It is a fine saying of Emerson,

> "In the mud and scum of things
> Something always, always sings."

If this is true of the mud, much more of the flower and the star. No treatise on the Sublime could afford to leave out the first verse of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Jean Paul Richter says "the greatest thought of the finite is the Infinite." Without this there can be no poetry. The thought of God is the most sublime and fruitful of thoughts. And this loftiest thought colors and measures all lower thoughts.

Seeing the heart of things and voicing the vision

in song is true poetry. The imaginative reproduction of the universe as revealing God, of all being, all beauty, all truth the source and end, this is Bible poetry. So the true poet is simply the seer and the voice, nature shines and sings through him. True poems sing themselves, they escape as unconsciously from the essence of earth and air as the scent from the violet or the music from the bird. Emerson says "The free winds told him what they knew." The surging life of humanity becomes self-conscious in the poet, he sings the "still sad music of mankind"; the wide universe sings through him, it is the song of earth and star; God speaks through him, and the poet is prophet as well. The poet is rapt, the truth discloses itself to him dressed in a word garb of supernatural beauty. God in the poet enables him to see God in everything. The Bible poet often seems inspired in a higher degree than other poets so that he sings more clearly and fully of God, and in many instances in an entirely different manner so that he voices a special message from God.

The element of poetry is very large in the Bible. The Books of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Lamentations are entirely poetical. The line between poetry and rhetoric being less sharply marked in the Hebrew than in our English literature, the great orations of the Prophets not infrequently rise into poetic strains. In the historic books also a vivid story sometimes bursts forth from prose into poetry. He who has the poetic ear will also gladly recognize that many of the sayings of Christ are gems of poetry, radiant with beauty and ringing with music.

Form of Poetry

Hebrew poetry has a form of its own in which it finely expresses the sublimity and independence of its spirit. While measured syllables in rhyme are not absent they do not abound in the Bible. The rhythm of its poetry is not that of words but of thought. Perhaps it may be said that deeper than all the rhythm of art is that of nature which art would fain catch. Poetry tries to catch it in measured syllable and in rhyme, the beat of time and musical note, and sometimes loses the subtler rhythm of thought. The Hebrew poets in subordinating form to thought come nearer to Nature's heart and echo the music of its surging heart beats. Bible poetry by its picturesqueness addresses the eye, each poem is a gallery of word pictures, by its simple natural harmony it addresses and charms the ear. The harmony is that of parallelism, short sentences carrying on the thought in regular movement, the thought and feeling welling forth naturally as from a bubbling spring. The poetry of nature, it may well be called. The rapid accumulation of thought and feeling in some gifted soul results in the quick repetition of short sentences just as passionate feelings naturally express themselves in quick breathings, rapid heart-beats, marching steps. Short sentences marching after each other, this is Hebrew parallelism. The rhythm is like the swing of a pendulum, like the tramp of an army, like the stately stride of a king, the rhythmic march of thought. This simple and noble form of poetry loses few of its striking features by translation. The fact that the Psalms are so fresh and living to-day in the

many languages of the world is due not only to the spirit but largely to the form of Hebrew poetry.

Dress of Poetry

The dress of poetry comes from the country where the poet lives.

> "If you the poet would understand
> You must dwell in the poet's land."

Icelandic songs have the background of snow wastes and the accompaniment of the storm wind. Tales of the Orient are told in the twilight under the whispering palm trees. The dweller in the tropics must know something of our northern clime or he will miss the music we hear in Poe's Bells and the genial warmth of the glowing hearth in Whittier's Snow Bound. The poem is the child of its own time and clime, we must know something of the circumstances of its birth if we would see its beauty. Figures of speech arise spontaneously from experience. The word paintings of the poet are of the scenes his eyes beheld.

Widely different ages and lands reflect themselves in the poems of the Bible. *Psalm 137, The Lament of the Captives,* was evidently written at a late date and on the great plains of Babylon. So other poems were writen at a very early day and in the desert.

The *Song of Moses,* Deuteronomy 32: 1-43, at the close of his life draws its imagery largely from Sinai and Moab. The memories of the glory of God revealed to him in the mountain are uppermost at the close of his life. Nine times he calls God, the Rock. And he builds his hope for the nation entirely upon

Him. The Song is in fine harmony with the occasion of its birth.

Still we have only glimpses of other lands, while the vision of the home country is frequently and most lovingly depicted. The Bible land itself, thrown up by the wide desert against the great sea, with its lofty outlook, its rugged hill country, its plains and valleys, its snow clad Hermon and its torrid Jordan depression, reflects itself in Bible poetry.

Psalm 1st is the beautiful gateway not only into the Book but into the Psalm Country itself. The mountains of Ebal and Gerizim are on either side and snow-clad Hermon, like the Great White Throne of Judgment, is in the distance. The tree figure is from the Jordan Valley, the chaff figure from the hill country, and the congregation figure from the Temple courts.

The most sublime and impressive imagery sets forth God in His relation to His land and people. Light is His garment. Thunder is His voice.

Psalm 29th, The Song of the Thunder-storm, graphically pictures the majestic sweep of the storm, with its seven thunder voices, as it rises from the great sea, sweeps over the mountains and passes away into the desert. Now the whole landscape is fresh and the sky is clear and everything in the wide earth, the great Temple of God, says Glory, and the last note of the thunder voice is the word peace.

Poetry in Worship

The Psalms seem to have formed an important part of the Temple worship. While many may have been recited in its liturgy many evidently were to be

sung and bear indications of having been set to music.

Some of the Psalms are so arranged as to force the conclusion that they were sung in parts, a portion of the choir singing in response to another portion, and at times the whole choir and the people joining in the chorus.

Psalm 107, the Song of the Redeemed, was probably written for Temple use and so arranged. We can but faintly imagine its effective rendering by the great choir of four thousand voices, with the full orchestra accompaniment of three hundred instruments, in the open air in the courts of the Temple on Mount Moriah; it must have been an act of worship befitting a nation offering the praises of the whole earth to the Lord God Almighty. The first three stanzas are a prelude to be sung by a few strong voices with a succession of trumpet tones, to prepare for the great theme. Then follows a succession of strophes, each having a double refrain. In each following a description of distress there is a cry for help. This was probably sung by a few voices without instruments. Then there is a description of deliverance and an outburst of praise. This would be sung by many voices with loud instruments. There are four of these strophes, each increasing in power. Then follows a long postlude, sung by choir and people in grand chorus, with all the instruments of music, voicing forth the praises of the redeemed.

The two prevailing ideas in Hebrew life find their fullest expression in these Psalms of Worship. The first is God in covenant with man. *Psalm 89 may be called The Song of the Covenant.* God's faithfulness

is its theme. He is a covenant keeping God. It contains a long sustained adoration of God which excels among the praises of Israel. The second is the great subject of the covenant, the Coming King, the promised Messiah. Contained also in this 89th Psalm.

> "His seed shall endure forever,
> And his throne as the sun before me,
> It shall be established forever as the moon,
> And as the faithful witness in the sky."

There seem to be three distinct features of this Messianic element in the Psalms sometimes appearing singly, sometimes together.

There is what may be called the experimental. The psalmist in his experiences as a child of God trusting and serving Him in sunshine and darkness, spoke words well fitting the lips of Him who long after walked the fields of Galilee. *Psalm 22 may be called The Song of the Suffering Messiah.* The king in describing the path of his suffering leading him to his glory, described at the same time the deeper suffering and the greater glory of the greater King.

Then there is what may be called the rapturous. The psalmist cherishing in his heart the promise of the coming Messiah pours forth a song of hope and love in language so lofty and significant that we adoringly recognize a "greater than Solomon is here."

Psalm 72, The Song of the King's Reign, is clearly of this rapturous kind.

Then there is what may be called the predictive. Certain features of the coming Messiah evidently beyond the experiences, even beyond the hopes of the

psalmist, were revealed to him and so are enshrined in the Psalms. *Psalm 110 may be called the Song of the King-Priest,* and seems to be of this description.

These few selections show what a wide range, what a lofty flight the genius of Bible poetry takes, how it soars from the adoring soul, through the glorious universe, and worships God enthroned in light.

That Bible poetry has incited the imagination of mankind and inspired much of the finest poetry of the world cannot be questioned, but its noblest influence has ever been in quickening the spiritual nature of man.

CHAPTER XIII

EPIC POETRY

Songs in the Epic Spirit

A universe from which God is banished has no longer anything that irresistibly attracts the mind of man. It is a machine whose mathematics may be studied but whose life and glory have departed. Atheism cannot hope to produce great poetry. The great epics of heathen poets are stories of heroic deeds of both gods and men. To see God's being and purpose in nature and in our lives adds both force and beauty to them, brings the vision and the song of poetry.

Goethe in Faust wrote concerning man, and it is one of his most admired verses,

> "Like as a star
> That maketh not haste
> That taketh not rest
> Be each one revolving
> About his own weight."

We recognize the truth of star and man, both are self-centered; but it is not the highest and best truth of either, certainly not of man; there is a higher note, a loftier vision, a nobler nature. Much of the admiration the lines have awakened comes from the translation of Carlyle, giving the higher truth of both star and man:

"Like as a star
That maketh not haste
That taketh not rest
Be each one fulfilling
His God-given hest."

The great theme of the Bible is God, the revelation of his being and his works, his character and his dealings with men. But no eye can see God, no ear can hear him speak; man may be conscious of his presence and of his commands, and may act according to this consciousness, but even such a one finds it difficult to describe God so that others may see and hear him. The epic poet describes the actors and their deeds as he sees them and makes us see them, the dramatic poet presents the actors before us and they speak and act for themselves, both description and presentation are difficult when God himself is the subject. The Bible in its narrative, its oratory and its poetry struggles with this immense difficulty; it may be said to be one vast Epic from Genesis to Revelation, one vast Drama; its aim is to make men see and hear God.

Much of the narrative of the Bible is written in the true epic spirit, not in dry and dull details, a mere enumeration of events, but in a way to kindle the imagination and stir the emotions to see and feel the events. This is sometimes supplemented by song; the feelings of the actors break through all restraints and, in describing the main features of the events, rise up in praise to the unseen God who has brought them to pass. These may be called songs in the epic spirit, songs that describe and express the spirit of the action.

Such songs keep the spirit of the action alive through the coming ages: as some one says: "Let me make the songs of a people and I care not who makes their laws."

The story of the deliverance of the Children of Israel from their Egyptian bondage (Exodus 7-14) is a prose epic, and the Hebrew prose of short, vivid sentences is not far removed from the Hebrew poetry of parallel sentences. Egypt at that time was a great world empire extending to the Euphrates on the northeast and to the center of Africa on the south. Its home was the valley of the Nile, a narrow ribbon of land ten miles wide and a thousand miles long cut out from the great desert and made very fertile by the annual overflow of the river and by the warm, cloudless sky. The Egyptians worshipped their river, their sky, and prolific life. This affords the background of the tremendous scenes of the plagues, and the story is simply and graphically told so that we, even in this far off age and land, can see them.

Two nations are the great parties in action, one dominant, one depressed; Pharaoh and his court represent the one, Moses and Aaron and a few slaves represent the other; God is present but, as ever, unheard and unseen. The river becomes a curse, from it pests and pestilences arise and afflict prolific life. The clear sky becomes angry with lightning and thunder, with hail and locusts, with black darkness; and in the night time stark death stalks through the land striking every home. The depressed nation passes out into freedom; the dominant nation, recovering its courage, pursues; and its great army is utterly destroyed in the overwhelming sea. Now the feelings

of the rescued nation burst forth in praise to the unseen God, their great deliverer; and the song, of necessity, takes the epic form describing the culminating act of the deliverance (Exodus 15). It may bear the title "The Song of Glorious Triumph." The first and second verses form the prelude:

"This is my God, I will praise him."

The song has three parts; the first part (verses 3-5) simply describes the event:

"Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea.
They went down into the depths like a stone."

The second part (verses 6-10) gives a few powerful touches of details of dramatic force:

"The enemy said,
I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,
They sank as lead in the mighty waters."

The third part (verses 11-18) describes the far reaching results of the glorious deliverance:

"The peoples have heard, they tremble,
Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia.
The Lord shall reign forever and ever."

The plan of the spontaneous song seems like throwing a stone into the water: it plunges into the water, the water closes over it, the ripples spread to the far off shore.

The postlude follows:

"Sing ye to the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously,
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

In later days songs on the same subject arose, Psalms 78, 105, 106, but have less of the epic spirit.

In Judges, the fifth chapter, we have another epic song, and the same event is described in prose in the fourth chapter; both show the prominence and honor given to woman in Israel. There are hints in the narrative that the oppression was lustful in the degradation of woman; hence Deborah, the mother in Israel, and Jael, the wife of the traitor, revenge womanhood upon the oppressor. The song may be called "Great Deliverance" and has the epic character of describing the event, and seems the spontaneous praise of the actors. The prelude (2-5) contains an apostrophe to the Lord; the song is divided into three parts: the first describes the oppression (6-11); the second (12-18), the rally to resist oppression; the third (19-31), the defeat and destruction of the oppressor. Verses 24-31 present two women in strong contrast: Jael in killing Sisera, and his mother in waiting for his return; naturally our sympathies would be with the mother.

> "Through the window she looked forth and cried,
> The mother of Sisera cried through the lattice,
> Why is his chariot so long in coming?
> Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?"

The pathos is strong, the mother watching for one who will never return. By a daring poetic imagery our sympathies turn from the mother to Jael, when we hear how the mother consoles herself with what would have happened had Sisera triumphed.

> "Her wise ladies answered her,
> Yea, she returned answer to herself,
> Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil,
> A damsel, two damsels to every man,
> To Sisera a spoil of diverse colors on the necks of the spoil."

Well may the women sing:

"So let thy enemies perish O Lord."

An epic narrates stirring events, heroic action; we of course find feeling in them, we infer it; but an epic song may express progress of feeling primarily, and we may have to infer the events.

The Song of Songs which is Solomon's is an epic idyl of home and love, as in Ruth, only the events are less prominent and the feelings are graphically expressed. Courtship and marriage are important experiences in human life, man was created male and female, the two natures are needed to complete human nature, and when wedded by pure, strong love form the highest ideal of life on earth. This is expressed in the Song of Songs; it is superlative, the best love song of all the ages. It is a song made up of songs; the King sings of the Bride, the Bride of the King, and those who witness their happiness sing of that joy. At first blush it does not seem to be a song of praise to God as he is hardly referred to in the whole book, and some have questioned why it should be included among the books in the Bible; but the finest expression of the highest human happiness may be regarded as itself praise of God, as the singing of birds, as the fragrance of flowers, as the beauteous light upon land and sea are in themselves voices of praise to God. Besides, this highest relationship of man and woman has been chosen in other books of the Bible to illustrate the relation between God and his people, they are personified as his bride, and this superlative song of earth's happiness lifts one's thought to the happi-

ness of the eternal life: Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride in the Palace above, the Father's house of many mansions.

One view of the song based upon this illustration of the higher relation, regards it as an allegory, that the poet is directly describing Christ and his Church under the figure of Solomon and his Bride. The persons and objects are not real but figures of spiritual persons and objects, the filling in of the details of the scenes has reference only to Christ and his Church. The devout imagination takes the wildest flight, without restraint, and often out of sight of any power of reason we at present possess. A few examples are at least curious.

(2: 16 and 6: 3)

"He feedeth among the lilies"

means Christ condescends to dwell among his lowly people.

(2: 17 and 8: 14)

"Make haste my beloved
And be like a roe or a young hart
Upon the mountains of spices"

means Christ coming to his people through the ordinances.

A whole book has been written describing the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and it has high spiritual value coming from a devout, adoring soul, as its title would lead one to infer: "All about Jesus." It is based upon the ecstatic description the enraptured bride gives of her lover, the King (5: 10-16); it requires a marvelous ingenuity to find in these verses a

description of Christ, the writer brought far more to the passage than it contained.

The Song of Songs, whether written by Solomon or by a much later poet making Solomon its hero, is a song of pure love.

There are two views of the story underneath the song. One is that a most beautiful peasant maiden in the north of the land captures the heart of Solomon. He has her brought to Jerusalem and becomes her enraptured suitor. Solomon the magnificent bows at her feet, all the glory of his court, all the glamour of his power, all the charm of his person, all the ardor of his love are lavishly offered to her: but in vain. She has given her heart to an humble shepherd lover in her own land; the King has no charm for her. It is a song of true love.

The other story under the song is that Solomon, visiting the northern portion of his kingdom, catches a glimpse of this wonderfully beautiful maiden, falls in love with her and wishes to win her heart. He lays aside his royal state, disguises himself as a shepherd, and courts her. Her heart is free and soon yields to his wooing, and they become betrothed. He goes to Jerusalem on some pretext, and after a short time, still maintaining his disguise, he sends for her to come to him. She, supposing she is to meet her humble lover, comes in her pure simplicity to the great city; Solomon meets her, still disguised, and they are married; a case of pure, wedded love. Now the disguise is thrown aside and Solomon the Magnificent, takes her as his Queen to his palace. The Song of Songs now arises and expresses the rapture of their love

in the palace and as they recount to each other the romance of the courtship and the betrothal in Lebanon. This latter story fits more closely all the bewildering beauty of the Song of Songs. It throbs with passion; the King has not made a political alliance without heart, for reasons of state, but a love match; and he and his bride cannot fully express their feelings for each other. The Bible consecrates all it touches; the greatest of all love songs can but faintly express the love of the greater King and his still more lowly bride.

As wedded love is the highest joy of two lives and marriage is the basis of society so the city may be regarded as the culminating experience of social life, the cluster of families in the bright flower of society. There are two great poems in the Bible concerning the city of Zion, neither can be called in any sense an epic, but we may glance at them here. The first is the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Poetry and oratory are closely akin and the great orator may have been the great poet as well. The destruction of a great city is one of the most awful experiences human nature can pass through, and this poem is evidently written by one who had shared in that experience. Though charged with deepest feeling it is most artistic in form. There are five songs or lamentations each complete in itself both in subject and form, each contains twenty-two verses according to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse in the first four divisions begins with the appropriate letter in progression to the end. The first song describes the desolation:

"How doth the city sit solitary,
She has become as a widow,
She weepeth sore in the night,
Her tears are on her cheeks."

The second song attributes the destruction to God's wrath:

"How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger,
He hath cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel."

The third song is the climax, the city becomes personified and moans out its distress:

"I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath
My flesh and my skin hath he made old, he hath broken my bones,
He hath fenced me about that I cannot go forth, he hath made my chain heavy."

The fourth song contrasts the present desolation with the past glory:

"How is the gold become dim, how is the most pure gold changed.

The fifth song is the prayer of the desolate city:

"Remember O Lord what is come upon us,
Behold and see our reproach,
Our inheritance is turned unto strangers,
Our houses unto aliens.
Turn thou us unto thee O Lord,
Hast thou utterly rejected us?"

The great song sobs itself into silence.

The city does not remain desolate in the dark night of God's wrath; through the vision of a great prophet we see the coming of a new and splendid day.

Again we recognize that oratory and poetry are close akin, that fine oratory while in prose form has the loftiest spirit of poetry. Isaiah, 40th-66th chapters, takes the form of spiritualized drama, no persons are seen, but the change of speakers is frequent and is arranged in acts or scenes. The orator or poet becomes rapt in his vision and speaks for others in such a way that we do not think of the poet but of the speakers he brings before us. The speakers in this rhapsody are Jehovah, the Celestial Hosts, the Nations, Cyrus, Israel, Zion, the Servant of Jehovah, the Prophetic Spectator, the Voice of Prophecy, the Redeemer of Zion, the Watchman of Jerusalem, an impersonal voice in the air cries, and there are hymns as sung by unseen choirs.

We can give only an outline of the Rhapsody of Zion Redeemed:

Prelude, Hope for Israel (40: 1-11).
Act 1, Scene 1, Glory of Jehovah enthroned the nations before him (40: 12-42: 17).
Scene 2, Judgment on Babylon (42: 18-48). Refrain.
Act 2, Scene 3, Redemption of Zion,
Israel in the background,
Servant of Jehovah in foreground (49-52: 12).
Scene 4, Servant of Jehovah exalted through suffering (52: 13-53).
Zion exalted with him (54-55).
Scene 5, Sin and Forgiveness (56-57). Refrain.
Act 3, Scene 6, The Redeemer come to Zion,
Zion triumphant (58-62).
Scene 7, Redemption through Judgment (63-66).
Thus saith the Lord:
"The heaven is my throne
The earth is my footstool.
What place shall be my rest?
What manner of house will ye build unto me?"

CHAPTER XIV

DRAMATIC POETRY

The Book of Job

Literature is artistic, its creations hold their place in the world's esteem by completeness of thought and beauty of form. The writings of the masters have qualities rendering them agreeable to the eye and to the ear, both beauty and music, elegance and harmony. Many acknowledged masters of literature are outspoken in their appreciation of the Book of Job.

Carlyle says, "I call the Book of Job one of the grandest things ever written by pen. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it of equal literary merit."

Froude says, "This book when it is allowed to stand on its own merits is seen towering up alone far above all the poetry of the world."

Schaff says, "Considering its antiquity and artistic perfection it rises like a pyramid in the history of literature, without a predecessor and without a rival."

Moulton says, "If a jury of persons well instructed in literature were asked what is the greatest poem in the world's great literatures, I believe a large majority would give their verdict in favor of the Book of Job."

Daniel Webster says, "The Book of Job as a mere work of literary genius is the most wonderful produc-

tion of any age or of any language. It is purely intellectual, depending not on the interest of a story as does the Iliad, but entirely upon the power of the dialogue. I read it often and always with renewed delight."

Hamilton Mabie says, "Nobody can know the Psalms of David or the Prophecies of Isaiah or that sublime Book of Job without being imbued with a keen imagination."

The author of this masterpiece of poetry is not known, nor even the time in which it was written. Some think it was written in the time of Abraham as all the local color is of that age, but against this is the perfection of its literary form. Some think it was written in the time of Solomon or later, against this is the absence of all reference to national history or present conditions. Some think it was written by several authors in different ages, against this is the rarity of such genius.

The poem may be regarded as pure drama; the poet does not describe in his own words the deeds and sayings of others as in epic poetry, he simply presents Job and his friends in certain circumstances, and they speak their thoughts and feelings to each other. God is the principal person in the Bible and one instinctively feels the inappropriateness of a drama in which this principal character is either brought forward or left out. The great poet of this book has two daring devices by which he brings God himself forward as the principal actor in this drama. There is a prologue in which he describes a scene in heaven and a scene on earth as in epic poetry, then follows the drama in five

acts, at its close there is the description of a scene on earth, the epilogue of the poem. In the prologue and in the epilogue God is the principal person, he is described as in epic poetry, but this must be regarded as the bold setting of the scene by the dramatist. In the last act of the drama the poet by a bold device brings God forward, and his words form the climax of the poem; a great storm arises, one of Job's friends graphically describes its approach; the thunderstorm is God's garment, and the unseen God speaks from the wind-driven clouds. The splendid genius of the poet is seen not only in this setting of the speech of God, but in that the speech itself is worthy of the speaker, it is the long-sustained culmination of the drama.

The theme of the drama is "The mystery of the suffering of a good man under the government of the righteous God." This is a colossal theme, colossal in its grave simplicity and in the dignity of its treatment. The theme some have suggested, mislead by the prologue, of "How the righteous can suffer and endure steadfast to the end" is comparatively a small theme, it centers interest in Job, a mere man; while the drama in the sweep and loftiness of its discussion centers interest in the righteous God.

While the scene in heaven is a part of the book, Job and his friends are entirely ignorant of it, and God when he speaks does not refer to it.

The story is quickly told. Job is a man of virtue, prosperity and happiness; suddenly prosperity is swept away, bereavement displaces happiness, and sickness, painful and loathsome, lays him low; only virtue remains. Job poor, friendless, loathsome, is upon an

ash-heap outside the town, removed from his home, cast out by mankind; and the weary days pass on, length of time adds to his sufferings. Friends of his prosperous days living at a distance, hear of his great disaster and come to him, and are astounded at his great distress. Now Job and his friends enter upon a deep, thoughtful and often passionate discussion of the righteousness of God. They do not for a moment question but that the righteous God has brought this distress upon Job. How can it be explained and justified? At length God himself enters upon the discussion, he speaks from the whirlwind.

Then the scene changes and Job is completely restored to health and prosperity.

With reference to the theme itself, the problem of evil resting heavily upon the good in this world, other literatures, philosophies and religions have varied explanations; their entire absence from this drama is itself noteworthy. Some hold there are conflicting Gods, no one supreme; or God is not good, he delights in human sufferings; or God is powerless, has made forces and laws but cannot control them; or God is indifferent, he does not care; or there is no God, only blind chance or fate. In this great poem the rule of the righteous God in all nature and in human life is fully acknowledged.

The book evidently divides itself into five sections, we may call each section an act, so this drama is complete in five acts. The first act embraces the first eleven chapters, it includes the stage setting in the prologue and the first round of the discussion by Job and his three friends. Job speaks first three times

and each friend speaks in answer to him. The light thrown upon the colossal theme in both prologue and discussion is that under the righteous government of God a good man may be tested by suffering, both to confirm him and to vindicate him against the false charges that he is good only because he is prosperous.

The second act, 12-20 chapters, contains the second round of the discussion. Job speaks first three times and each friend speaks in answer to him. The friends here develop their opinion that Job must have some special wickedness unknown to men but known to God which is the cause of his great suffering. Job resenting this speaks in several instances concerning God's dealings with him in terms which lead one to fear he may soon rebel against God. As in a drama the hero generally passes at least once under a cloud, so Job in this act; but he quickly and strongly wins one's admiration again for his strong faith, in the last verses of the 19th chapter.

The third act, chapters 21-31, continues the charge of the three friends that Job must be specially wicked since God has sent such special distress upon him. Job speaks first twice and two friends answer him; Job speaks again, the third friend is silenced; Job speaks again, and at last all the friends are silenced. The light thrown upon the colossal theme in the second and third act is that suffering is a punishment for sin under the government of the righteous God.

The fourth act, chapters 32-37, contains four speeches by the fourth friend. Each speech is received by Job in silence. One hardly knows how to interpret this silence of Job, is it acceptance or rejection of the

view presented? Here seems another instance of the art of the dramatist. In act second our hero sank a little in our esteem and we feared for him, here as in dramas generally there is suspense, we hold our breath but feel sure the hero will stand the strain and come out in success. The light thrown upon the colossal theme in this act is that suffering while not a punishment may be a discipline into greater virtue under the government of the righteous God.

The fifth act, chapters 38-42, contains the speech of God from the whirlwind and the epilogue. God speaks of the mystery, beyond the powers of man to fathom, of God's creation and government of the great universe. The light thrown upon the colossal theme is that suffering while a mystery to us is clear to him, it is needed in the culmination of creation, the making of a man. The epilogue shows the quick climax of the drama, the restoration of Job to more than earthly happiness. The light thrown upon the colossal theme is that goodness is sure of final triumph under the government of the righteous God.

It is quite evident in this great drama that while Job is the human hero and holds our interest to the close, the real Hero is the God dealing with Job, testing him, punishing him, disciplining him, making a man of him, and crowning him at last; God is the great Hero of this, the greatest of the world's dramas. The greatness of the poem is thus seen in the plot or story of the drama through successive stages of interest or suspense until the climax is reached and the righteous God brings Job out of his suffering into great prosperity. Still it is in the discussion of the

colossal theme, in the speeches of Job, his friends and God himself that the greatness of the poem is generally recognized. The wide sweep of thought over all the varied experiences of man's life, and over the works of God in the heavens and in the earth, the clearness and beauty of the expression of this thought, greatness of thought and beauty of form, combine to make this poem the greatest in the literature of the world. Modern culture flowering forth in the greatest genius can appreciate but cannot excel many passages clustering in the book, from the description of the grave, 2:17-19, to that of the sea, 38:9-11. Modern wickedness oppressing his fellowman can hardly be more hideously described than in 24:9-11. Every careful reader and every careful reading of the book will select fresh passages of strength or beauty.

This ancient book in its descriptions of God's work in nature is free from the crudities that prevail in other ancient literatures, and the descriptions are often so deep and so true that modern science confirms but does not exhaust them. As the wonderful hymn of creation, the first chapter of Genesis, describes the successive stages of the formation of the earth and its living voyagers through space in a way beyond the knowledge of ancient times, and in the order since described by modern science, so this book awakens our wonder. Take for swift examination a few references to the heavens, and modern astronomy confirms but does not exhaust them. Job says (26:7) "God stretcheth out the north over empty space, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." The north is still comparatively empty of stars seen by the naked eye not only

but by the strongest telescope and by modern stellar photography, and the earth is a ball hanging from that empty space. God says (38:31) "Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?" God is speaking of his mysterious power, you, Job, cannot do what I am doing. Modern astronomy says the cluster of the Pleiades is being bound closer together, and that the bands of Orion over our solar system are being loosed, that our sun and its planets are moving with utmost rapidity, eighteen miles a second, away from the constellation Orion toward the constellation Hercules.

God continues (Job 38:32) "Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season or canst thou guide the Bear with her train?" The Mazzaroth are the bright shining ones, the disks among the stars, our planets. The Bear is the one who labors, the all night watcher; of the summer heavens it is Arcturus, a sun of the same class as our sun, but 375,000 times its volume, and giving 5,000 times as much light, and probably having a much larger number of planets circling about it. Can you bring out the planets of your little sun, Job, or the planets of the greatest sun in the heavens? You cannot, but I am doing it. Beyond the knowledge of his day that the earth was a ball, that the sun was related to the Pleiades or Orion, that the sun had planets or that there were other such suns, this wonderful poet of the ancient time selects features of the heavens and describes them in harmony with our modern knowledge; we wonder but do not attempt to explain.

Still the greater mystery remains, why does God do

all these great deeds? They are only explained in the culmination, in the making of a man.

The colossal theme, "The suffering of a good man under the government of the righteous God," is discussed not only in that ancient time but for all time, our modern time as well. But as with science so with religion, we live after Christ; and a poem written today upon the subject would be full of the hope of the immortal life in heaven, in Christ's presence and likeness. Though written long before Christ, possibly long before the preparation made for Christ's coming in the worship of Israel, and in the preaching of the prophets, there are bright stars shining in the book which our modern Christianity confirms but does not exhaust: Job 16:20-22 and 33:22-24 are such stars, and especially in the second act of the drama when Job comes out from the cloud which had enveloped him and sees the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness (19:23-27).

"Oh that my words were now written,
Oh that they were inscribed in a book
That with an iron pen and lead
They were graven in the rock forever.
But as for me, I know that my Redeemer liveth
And at last he will stand up upon the earth.
And after my skin even this body is destroyed,
Then without my flesh shall I see God,
Whom I, even I shall see on my side,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger."

We wonder at such faith in that ancient time but do not attempt to explain.

CHAPTER XV

DIDACTIC POETRY

The Proverbs

Aristotle describes poetry as "the expression of the universal, as more philosophic and of higher worth than history." There is deep philosophy in the Bible based upon its four underlying truths: there is one God, he created the universe, he created man capable of holding fellowship with Himself, and he governs the universe in righteousness. The knowledge of God and of his will is the expression of the universal according to Bible philosophy, it is expressed not merely in words but especially in practice, knowledge put into action. The deep philosophy of the Bible results in wisdom, it is not merely great powers of reasoning and vast stores of knowledge, but knowledge and reasoning applied to the conduct of life. An able and learned man may be a very foolish one in his living, it requires more than learning to make one wise. The Wisdom Literature of the Bible is the result of reflection upon the practical side of life, it describes the proper conduct of man in a universe governed by the righteous God. True poetry is more than seeing to the soul of things and voicing the vision in song, it is voicing the vision in the conduct of a life in harmony with God in his universe.

In describing the principles and results of conduct the proverb has been used in all ages and by all races. The description is put first in a terse saying, an illustration or comparison follows, equally terse, to make the whole truth pungent and fix it in the memory. Our own Dr. Franklin was a master of this popular wisdom. Here is one of his proverbs: "Poverty often deprives a man of all spirit and virtue." A terse statement; now by comparison and illustration he makes it pungent and it clings to the memory: "It is hard for an empty bag to stand upright," and the proverb is complete.

The Book of Proverbs is the philosophy of the Bible applied to the conduct of life and cast in the form of poetry. The parallel couplet is the elementary type of Hebrew poetry, and this gives a fine form for the proverb. The unit proverb is a unit of thought in a unit of form. There are three main kinds of parallels in Hebrew poetry which find fine use in the Proverbs; the first is the repeating parallel, the philosophy is complete in each line:

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

The second is the advancing parallel, the philosophy requires both lines to complete it:

"As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,
So is the sluggard to them that send him."

The third is the opposing parallel, the philosophy is strengthened by contrast:

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth
But the righteous are bold as a lion."

The Proverbs concerning the conduct of life and expressed in these appropriate forms have awakened great admiration in careful students of the book. Dr. Guthrie says "The Proverbs fulfil the requirements of effective oratory in that almost every verse both strikes and sticks." Principal Lee says "The high character Scotsmen have for practical sagacity comes from their acquaintance with the book of Proverbs." Coleridge says "The book of Proverbs is the best statesman's manual ever written."

The book is frequently described as a guide to business success.

It is quite evident that proverbs arise in two ways. Most of the proverbs of all nations arise probably from the general experiences of mankind which at length are expressed in the concise sayings of the people; no one knows or can find out who first spoke the saying; its first form has probably been improved by successive generations, until at length it can be improved no further; it is a perfect proverb. The collection of such proverbs is like placer mining; the grains of gold have been washed out from the rock by the frost and storms of ages, have been borne down in the winter floods and at length have been deposited in the sand bar; the miner simply washes them from the worthless sand. The collector of proverbs simply separates the wise sayings of the experience of mankind through the ages, from the unwise; the grains of gold from the worthless sand. Such proverbs may be properly credited to the collector, his genius discovers and preserves them; doubtless many such were credited to Dr. Benjamin Franklin.

Many other proverbs arise from the reflection of some wise man upon the experiences of mankind and he has the skill to express his reflection in a concise, sharp, witty saying. This is more like quartz mining, the miner digs into the rock for the gold. In the Book of Proverbs the first nine chapters contain proverbs arising in the latter way, the remaining chapters, with a few exceptions, seem to contain proverbs arising in the former way.

The first nine chapters may be regarded as a Poem in praise of wisdom and it is composed of several minor poems, each complete in itself, and combining make the complete poem on wisdom. These minor poems have the nature of sonnets in that they have two groups of parallels expressing two successive phases of a single thought, and so are enlarged proverbs. There are eighteen such complete poems in the combined poem of the first nine chapters. Chapter 1 : 7-19 may be rapidly examined, it is a complete poem of this kind; the first three verses are introductory; the tenth verse is the soul of the poem:

> "My son if sinners entice thee
> Consent thou not."

Verses 11, 12, 13, 14 elaborate the first

> "My son if sinners entice thee

Verses 15, 16, 17, 18 elaborate the second

> "Consent thou not."

Each of these eighteen poems may be given a title by the attentive reader, the author having neglected this

work. A good title for the poem we have just considered would be "Evil Company." Another complete poem though shorter, may bear the title "The Sluggard": chapter 6:6-11:

> "Go to the ant, thou sluggard
> Consider her ways and be wise."

Verses 7 and 8 elaborate the last parallel

> "Consider her ways and be wise"

Verses 9, 10, 11 elaborate the first parallel

> "Go to the ant, thou sluggard."

The whole poem in praise of wisdom seems to grow more intense in spirit and elaborate in form and to culminate in the eighth chapter. Here also the poet has a device which we shall see is frequently found in the Psalms, that of a striking and powerful contrast without a word of transition. He wishes to awaken special interest in the poem on wisdom in the eighth chapter; he personifies wisdom as a stately, pure and beautiful woman, the mother adored by her sons. The interest is quickened by a striking contrast, the seventh chapter immediately preceding, is the poem of the evil woman (7:27):

> "Her house is the way to Sheol
> Going down to the chambers of death."

The ninth chapter contains three poems continuing the contrast. The remainder of the book is composed largely of unit proverbs concerning the fruits of good and bad conduct in the various relations of life, ar-

ranged with little or no order, a collection of proverbs arising from popular use. Among these may be found a few poems of arranged proverbs as the poem on Intoxication (23:29-35) and on Good Husbandry (27:23-27).

The thirtieth chapter contains a few enigmas or dark sayings where the comparison parallel of the proverb is omitted with the design to exercise the reader's sagacity to supply it. The book closes with an elaborate acrostic, it is a beautiful poem in praise of a virtuous woman.

CHAPTER XVI

LYRIC POETRY

The Psalms

"The Psalms" was a favorite and familiar book in the time of Christ. There are 283 clear quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament, of these 116 are from the Psalms. In the early church "The Psalms" was the first book put into the hands of the young converts, the primer of religious life, and no one could be admitted to the ministry unless he knew the psalter by heart. The book has found a prominent place in the public worship of every historic church and it is today the devotional book of the Christian world. Believers in all ages have found no words better fitted to express their deepest feelings in all the vicissitudes of human experience than those of these ancient psalms. Intense feeling pulsates in many psalms, sorrows are voiced in sobbings, joys in exclamations and in outbursts of exultation and often these are contrasted and reiterated in the same psalm, like the recurrent melody of marriage and funeral bells.

How and when these ancient psalms came to be collected in one book we do not know; the process seems to have had stages; as the revised version of our English translation shows, they were really

gathered into five books. The early books may have been collected for use in the services of Solomon's Temple, the whole of the five books were probably used both in recitation and song in the worship of the second Temple in the time of Christ. The subjects of the songs vary alike in all the books so that no classification can be made. There is a singular feature that has awakened considerable study: the five books are characterized by a varied use of the Hebrew names of God: Jehovah and Elohem. In our authorized version Jehovah is translated Lord and Elohem, God; in the American Revision Jehovah is retained but Elohem is still translated God.

In the first book, Psalms 1-41, Jehovah is used 272 times, Elohem 15 times; in the second book, Psalms 42-72, Jehovah is used 30 times, Elohem 164 times; in the third book, Psalms 73-89, Jehovah is used 44 times, Elohem 43 times; in the fourth book, Psalms 90-106, Jehovah is used 112 times, Elohem 7 times; in the fifth book, Psalms 107-150, Jehovah is used 227 times, Elohem 35 times. The first book is the Jehovah book, the second book is the Elohem book, the third book is nearly equally Jehovah and Elohem, the last two books are Jehovah books. Those who care to count and compare will find this a marked feature of the books, but it will be difficult to draw any sane conclusion of either age or authorship.

The division into five books is believed by some to have been made in imitation of the fivefold division of the books of the law, the Pentateuch; the Law is God's fivefold voice to man, the Psalms is man's fivefold response to God. This at least makes prominent

the distinction between law and praise. The Psalms present religion not as a law given or a revelation made but as truth apprehended, a guidance experienced, they express obedience, trust and love in praise to God.

Much interest is often awakened in a song by knowing or even conjecturing as to who wrote it or first sang it, or when it first came into existence and use. There are three helps we have in trying to judge of the authorship or date of a Psalm.

First: the titles given to the Psalms; 100 bear some person's name in the title, 16 have headings without names, 34 have no headings at all, are called orphan psalms. These titles are of great though unknown antiquity, they were probably prefixed by the compilers of the books at various times prior to the Septuagint translation. There seems no reason to believe they were prefixed by the authors of the psalms, their only value seems in showing what the lovers of the psalms living nearest to the times of their origin thought concerning their authors.

Second: the historical allusions found in many of the psalms, the clearest being to the destruction of Jerusalem and to the captivity in Babylon.

Third: the style and language of the psalm. Every age has a distinctive style and language and the poet, however great a genius, expresses his loftiest thoughts and deepest feelings in the terms of the age in which he lives, voices the age. This is a difficult problem to solve by those living in far different lands and ages and decisions vary according to the taste and judgment of the critics.

When these three guides agree upon any psalm a fair inference would be that its author was discovered. Two of the most fully described days in the far past are found in the life of David, one joyous, one sad; the glorious day was that in which he brought the Ark to Jerusalem, dedicating the capital city to the worship of God, making it the Holy City, the City of the great King; Psalms 30, 15, 24 probably belong to this day. The sad day was that of David's flight from Jerusalem on account of the rebellion of his son Absalom; Psalms 4, 3, 63 probably belong to this day. This rebellion may be connected with David's great sin, and Psalms 6, 32, 51 are cries, of confession and sorrow, for God's forgiveness.

But in a real sense the greatest poets are impersonal, not who said it but what he said is of the highest interest, they are the voices of the higher intelligence, voices of the soul speaking to God and for God. Strong says "The true poet is one of the immortal few

> "Who to the enraptured soul and ear and eye
> Teach beauty, virtue, truth and love and melody."

When a poet nowadays writes a song he generally gives a title to it descriptive of its content, the subject he has in mind, and these titles are of great value to us in appreciation of the poem; the ancient poets gave no such descriptive titles. In the authorized version the translators of the Psalms give a full description of the contents, it is solely their opinion; the revised version gives the Psalm without any descriptive title, just as they found it; the American revision gives to

each Psalm a subject title, these sometimes show a fine appreciation of the translators, and this is their sole value, they in no sense came from the authors of the Psalms.

Each one may read a psalm so carefully that he may describe the subject according to his appreciation, he has the same right and duty and may succeed as well as the American revisers, perhaps better than they.

Psalm 19 has evidently three groups of verses: 1-6 describing the heavens, 7-9 describing the law of God, 10-14 describing man under the heavens and under the law. Many titles have been given to this Psalm, we may exercise our appreciation, our judgment and taste by choosing the best or by making one for ourselves. It has been called the Song of the Heavens, the Song of the Day, the Song of the Sun, the Song of the Law, the Song of Man, what he thinks of himself when conscious of the presence of God. The philosopher Kant speaks of the two perpetual wonders, the starry heavens above and the moral law within; in this Psalm the three are placed side by side without a word of transition: the heavens, the law, and man, the philosopher.

Of course the 150 Psalms do not all have equal merit, they appeal to different minds with varied force and to the same mind in different experiences. General opinion has selected a few as being of superior value, Psalm 23rd, the Song of the Shepherd. In the tent of the shepherd God is a Shepherd, God fits himself to the varied employments and experiences of his people. As the sheep are led by the shepherd as

the night comes on up the dark ravine to a place of safety on the hills, and when they no longer can see the shepherd in the gathering gloom they can see the crook swaying over his shoulder against the skyline, and when they can no longer see that they can hear him striking the hard road with the staff as he leads, so many a soul passing through the valley of the shadow of death has been comforted by the leading of the great Shepherd until the heights of safety have been reached.

Psalm 36, the Song of the Goodness of God. There are evidently three groups of verses, 1-4, 5-8, 10-11; the central group is a fine description of the goodness of God:

> "Thy loving kindness O Lord is in the heavens,
> Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies,
> Thy righteousness is like the great mountains,
> Thy judgments are a great deep."

By a daring device of the poet this splendid description of God is made more striking as it is contrasted, without a word of transition, with the wickedness of man described in verses 1-4:

> "The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit,
> He hath left off to be wise and to do good."

The white righteousness of God against the dark background of the wickedness of man, only an artist of the highest skill would dare the contrast. Well may such a Psalm close in an earnest prayer, verses 10-11.

Psalm 72 is attributed in the title to Solomon, it

may be called the Song of the Messiah. The King of Kings, whose reign shall extend over all the earth and last forever, who shall pay special attention to the poor and shall bless all men, who shall rule in righteousness, is evidently a greater king than Solomon in a more extensive and enduring kingdom, the real Kingdom of God.

Psalm 90 is attributed in the title to Moses, it may be called the Song of the Passing Generations; the greatness of the singer may account for the greatness of the song which has been called "the noblest of all human compositions." "The man grown grey with vast experience" making the eternal God his abiding place, sings of the passing generations of mankind. We may imagine a sunrise on the mountain as the scene of the Psalm, more enduring than the mountain is God, more quickly passing than the day is man. The freshness of the morning as each generation arises to face the lights and shadows of life, inspires the prayer closing the Psalm.

> "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us
> And establish thou the work of our hands upon us,
> Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it."

Psalms 103 and 104 are companion Songs, the first is the song of God's Throne in the Soul:

> "As the heaven is high above the earth
> So great is his mercy toward them that fear him,
> As far as the east is from the west
> So far hath he removed our transgressions from us,
> Like as a father pitieth his children
> So the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

The second is the Song of God's Throne in the Universe:

"O Lord my God, thou art very great,
Thou art clothed with honor and majesty,
Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment,
Thou stretchest out the heavens like a curtain."

Humboldt says this Psalm reflects the growing form of the whole cosmos, and anticipates all the sciences. The sciences are here singing the praises of the great Creator and Ruler of the Universe. In these two companion Psalms the poetry of the Bible reaches the climax of man praising God supreme over the soul within and the universe without.

Psalm 119 may be called the Song of the Law. In it the simple double parallelism is wrought out in its most elaborate form and still retains much of the music of song; it is an acrostic, there are twenty-two groups one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, each group has eight parallels, each one beginning with the letter to which the group belongs, and each parallel in the whole Psalm, with a single exception, gives some title or description of the law of God.

Psalm 139 may be called the Song of God's Omnipresence. The lofty genius of the poet represents the soul at first vainly trying to fly from his presence:

"Whither shall I flee from thy presence?
"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there,
"If I make my bed in sheol, behold thou art there."

At length the soul learns to rejoice in this presence,

"How precious are thy thoughts unto me O God!
"How great is the sum of them!
"When I awake I am still with thee."

In the last book of Psalms there are three groups. The Hallel Psalms, 113-118, were sung at the great feasts; it is probable that our Lord and his disciples sang 115-118 when they left the upper room after the institution of the Lord's Supper, Mark 14:26.

The Songs of Ascents, 120-135, were used by the pilgrims from all parts of the land as they went up to the great feasts at Jerusalem.

The Hallelujah Psalms, 146-150, in which the exultant spirit of worship culminates in a great outburst of praise to the Lord God close the book.

While many of these 150 Psalms may have been more generally used in the home than in the temple, and while many may have been recited rather than sung in the temple, there is abundant reason to believe that the temple service was very elaborate in its music. 1 Chronicles 25 gives a description of a great choir of 4,000 voices and a great orchestra of 300 instruments. In the daily service of the temple only a division of the whole was engaged, but the whole choir and orchestra were kept in training, though located in many different cities throughout the land, as each division was prepared to take its turn in the daily worship; and the whole choir and orchestra were drawn together on the great feast days.

There are indications in some of the Psalms that the musical rendering was very elaborate; some strange words of the Hebrew language are retained in our versions because their meaning is not fully known, but they seem to indicate musical directions. In our authorized version Neginoth is retained in the title of the 76th Psalm, the revised version ventures to trans-

late it "on stringed instruments"; Nehiloth, Psalm 5, probably indicates "the accompaniment of flutes"; Al tashheth, in Psalms 57, 58 and 75 probably means these Psalms were to be sung to the popular tune "Destroy not," a song of the vineyard referred to in Isaiah 65:8. So Shoshannin Eduth, in the 80th, indicates the name of the tune for that Psalm "The Lilies of Testimony"; Gittith, Psalm 81, probably indicates it was set to a melody used in treading the winepress. The Hebrew word Selah, so frequently used, probably means louder or rest.

Thus these strange Hebrew words with their dim memories become a kind of telephone to convey to our listening ears the strains of distant music, the praises of God in the temple-courts of far off Jerusalem.

Then too the structures of many of the psalms seem adapted to varied kinds of singing. Many Psalms are so nicely adapted to antiphonal singing that they seem even to our musically trained ears in this age of operas and oratorios to sing themselves. There are many passages evidently to be rendered by a single voice, solo singing; Psalm 34, the Song of Confidence in God, is such, solo voices mingled with chorus singing: 3rd verse, one voice, 4th another, 5th several voices together, 6th another solo, 8th a chorus, and so throughout the Psalm.

A glance at the 118th Psalm shows how elaborately it could be rendered by the great choir, it is a Song of thanksgiving:

Verses 1-4 antiphonal singing
5-7 solo 8-9 chorus 10-12 antiphonal

13-14 solo 15-16 chorus 17-19 solo
20 chorus of priests
21 solo 22-25 whole choir
26-27 chorus of priests
28 solo 29 whole choir.

Psalm 107, the Song of the Redeemed, has already been considered in Chapter XII. It is probable, as hinted, that the singing was not confined to the great choir but that the spirit of praise was so awakened in all the people that it culminated in congregational singing of the greatest conceivable kind; probably 20,000 people were gathered in the temple-courts on the great feast days and multitudes more in the nearby streets and upon the nearby hillsides. To such a vast audience as could crowd the temple-courts we have seen some of the great orators speak, we have listened to Isaiah as his clear ringing voice carried his message to the borders of the crowd, at the close of some great feastday service. We may again imagine ourselves there; the feastday songs have been rendered, probably the 107th Psalm has been sung by the great choir; we have listened to Isaiah in his great Golden Age Oration, Isaiah, chapters 2, 3, 4. Now comes the culminating act of worship: the High Priest's Benediction and the singing of the 67th Psalm; this Psalm gathers in itself the nation's praise for the covenant blessings and the nation's hope for the future under the reign of the Messiah; it was sung probably by the choir and the people as a response to the High Priest's Benediction (Numbers 6: 22-27), which was given by the priest in charge at the close of the morn-

ing and evening sacrifice each day but especially by the High Priest when he came out from the Holy of Holies on the great day of the whole year, the day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Then the choir of four thousand voices and three hundred instruments and the thousands of people in the temple-courts and in the streets and on the hillsides near the temple united in their response.

There are three blessings pronounced by the priest, so there are three strains of praise in the response each followed by a refrain. The first strain receives the blessing not for the nation alone but rather that God's salvation may be extended to all nations, the nation in covenant with God in this its highest act of worship, realizes God's gracious and lofty purpose to bless all nations. The worshiping nation crowding the city of God on the mountaintop of the Holy Land becomes the High Priest of all the nations of the earth and extends His benediction to all lands.

The second strain describes the joy of all the nations under the reign of the righteous Messiah. The third strain describes the fruitfulness of the whole earth when all nations shall receive the covenant of God bringing salvation. Each strain sung by the great choir is followed by the refrain sung by all the people:

> "Let the people praise thee O God
> Let all the people praise thee."

Well may we in this far off age and land answer Amen and Amen, for we are under the reign of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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